ALTERNATE ROUTES
A Critical Review

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Alternate Routes is a multi-disciplinary journal published annually by graduate students in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University in Ottawa. It is not, however, restricted to work from students at Carleton. We are interested in receiving papers written by graduate students (or co-authored with faculty) in any university. Editorial emphasis is on provocative analysis of contemporary issues and we particularly welcome papers dealing with debates within Canadian society.

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DEDICATION

This special issue of 'Alternate Routes' is dedicated to Frank Vallee who, despite his recent retirement, is still very much a part of the Sociology and Anthropology department at Carleton University. Frank's ready accessibility, his friendliness and insightful guidance has always ensured his popularity among both students and faculty at Carleton and the other universities, both at home and abroad, where he has taught during his long career.

More than most others, Frank has contributed to the development of the social scientific analysis of ethnicity in Canada. The field of ethnic studies, as indeed the disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology in this country, owe a debt to Professor Frank Vallee. The publication of this special issue presents an appropriate occasion for those of us who have benefitted from his experience to acknowledge this debt and to say quite simply, thanks for everything.

The Editors.

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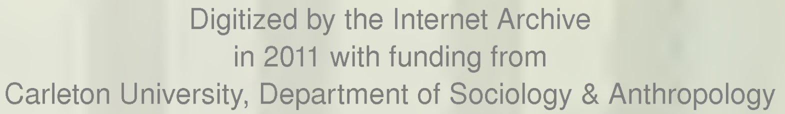
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Immigration Policies and the Creation of an Ethnically Segmented Working Class in British Columbia, 1880-1923 [1]

Gillian Creese

This paper examines the role of Canadian immigration policies in the creation of an ethnically segmented working class in pre-Second World War British Columbia. Existing research on the British Columbian working class has documented the radical nature of (white) working class trade union and socialist organization, while at the same time identifying anti-Asian racism as a major feature of organized (white) working class activity in the province. The formation of an ethnically segmented working class occurred through a complex and reciprocal process of ethnic segmentation within the labour market and the political and ideological practices of the working class. In British Columbia, I argue, state immigration policies played a crucial role in this process by according Asian immigrants, in contrast to European and American immigrants, an inferior political status as `non-settlers´ within Canada, reinforcing their marginal economic position within the labour market and placing Asian workers in a position of economic and political inferiority vis-a-vis other workers in the province. In this context, immigration policies became a focus of class conflict in British Columbia, and working class organization and consciousness developed in an ethnically segmented and racist form.

Cette étude traite du rôle des politiques canadiennes d´immigration dans la creation d´une classe ouvrière divisée, de point de vue ethnique, en factions, dans la Colombie britannique avant la deuxième guerre mondiale. D´ici, la recherche sur la classe ouvrière de la Colombie britannique met en point la nature radicale de l´organisation (blanche) ouvrière socialiste et syndicaliste, tout en identifiant le racisme pratiqué contre les asiatiques comme un aspect intégral de l´activité de la classe ouvrière (blanche) dans le province. La formation d´une classe ouvrière factionalisee de point de vue ethnique, s´est arrivée comme la suite d´un processus complèxe et reciproque de la division ethnique dans la demande pour ouvriers et des pratiques politiques et idéologiques de la classe ouvrière. En Colombie britannique, les politiques de l´état quant à l´immigration ont joué un rôle central dans ce processus en donnant aux immigrés asiatiques (comme contrast à ce qu´ont reçu leurs confrères européens et américains) un status inférieur en politiques au Canada comme "non-immigrants, non-citoyens". Ceci a renforcé leur position précaire quant à la demande pour labeur et a rendu plus inférieure la position économique et politique des ouvriere asiatiques, comparée à celle des autres ouvriers dans la province. Dans ce contexte, les politiques d´immigration sont devenues le centre de conflit entre les classes en Colombie britannique et l´organisation et la conscience ouvrière sont devenues racistes et factionalisées de point de vue ethnique.

Introduction

In contrast to Marxian assumptions that industrial capitalism would create a homogeneous and politically unified working class, developments throughout the capitalist world are characterized by cleavages of skill, ethnicity, and gender within the working class. This paper forms part of ongoing research into the articulation of class and ethnic relations in the practices of the British Columbia working class prior to the Second World War, when a relatively radical and class conscious tradition of labour organization encompassed a virulent form of anti-Asian agitation.[2] The presence of profound ethnic cleavages within an otherwise class conscious labour movement raises questions about the articulation of class and ethnicity in the `making´ of an ethnically segmented working class.

A useful way to address the articulation of class and ethnic relations is through an historical analysis of the `making´ of the working class and ethnic communities in the province, both as structural conditions of social relations of production and as cultural practices and institutions consciously created to cope with, mediate, and alter relations of class oppression and ethnic subordination. Although such a task is beyond the scope of this paper,[3] I shall focus on one aspect of the `making´ of an ethnically segmented working class in British Columbia through a discussion of Canadian immigration policies and class conflict over the issue of Asian immigration. Ethnic relations of inequality have formed a constitutive part of the development of the working class throughout Canada but the effect has not necessarily been divisive. As both Avery (1979) and Pentland (1981) point out, under some circumstances, ethnic solidarity has been known to strengthen working class consciousness and labour militancy. Instances of ethnic conflict or solidarity withing the working class, therefore, can only

be understood within historically specific circumstances. In British Columbia, I shall argue, state immigration policies and capitalist employment practices provided the context within which an ethnically segmented working class formed at the economic level of a segmented labour market and at the political and ideological levels of class practices. The Canadian state accorded Asian immigrants, in contrast to European and American immigrants, an inferior political status as `non-settlers´ within Canada, reinforcing their marginal economic position within the labour market and placing Asian workers in a position of economic and political inferiority vis-à-vis other workers. In this context, immigration policies became a focus of class conflict in British Columbia, and working class organization and consciousness developed in an ethnically fragmented and racist form.

Capitalism, Immigration, and Ethnic Segmentation

Immigration policies have had a major impact on the formation of the working class in Canada as a result of the nation-state´s history as a colonial-settler society. As H. Clare Pentland writes (1981), immigrants formed the raw material for the formation of a capitalist labour market in Canada beginning in the middle of the 19th century. Thus Canadian immigration policies and practices occurred in the context of the labour requirements of capitalist economic development as well as within the British Colonial heritage embedded in economic, political, and ideological structures. These two sets of historical processes, capitalism and British colonialism, have formed the focus of two different approaches to the analysis of Canadian immigration policy, both of which are inadequate explanations if isolated from a complex historical analysis of Canadian society.

Writers such as John Porter (1965;1979), Anthony Richmond (1970;1978), and David Hughes and Evelyn Kallen (1974), identify the link between state immigration policies and ethnic inequality within the class structure as a political process with power monopolized by the British charter group after the conquest of the French and native peoples and the institutionalization of British racial attitudes into immigration policies. As Hughes and Kallen write (112):

> As the dominant group, English Canadians have, from the beginning, exercised control of immigration policies, responsible for determining which ethnic groups would be allowed into Canada, where they would settle, what jobs they could assume, and what ranking and social position would be accorded them within the existing system of ethnic stratification.

While it would be wrong to dismiss the importance of British racism and status group politics as an ideological underpinning of Canadian immigration policies, it would be equally incorrect to accept an essentially idealist explanation of ethnic inequality and racism in Canada. The fundamental character of the Canadian state is that it is a capitalist, not simply a British, state in which capitalist social relations form the context of state policies and the class relations into which immigrants are socially organized, and, indeed, where state policies can become an object of class struggle as occurred over the issue of Asian immigration.

A Marxist analysis of state immigration policies focuses on capitalist class relations and the processes of accumulation. It has become common in recent years to link Canadian immigration policies with the legitimation of exploitative capitalist practices in the search for profit (see Basran, 1983; Bernier, 1979; Cappon, 1975 and Li and Bolaria, 1979). Like most Marxist theorists of race and ethnicity, these authors adopt an economistic understanding of material social relations and an interventionist theory of

the state in which capital dictates immigration policies and racist ideologies. In consequence, ethnic phenomena are reduced to capitalist epiphenomena. Ethnic oppression and racism, including racist immigration policies, are viewed as the direct outcome of capitalist attempts to divide the mutual interests of the working class and to prevent the development of class solidarity and effective working class struggle through the super-exploitation of migrant and non-European immigrant workers (see also Castles and Kosack, 1972; Gorz, 1970; Leggett, 1968; Oppenheimer, 1974; Reich, 1971, 1981 and Szymanski, 1976). The functional nature of ethnic conflict and racism for capitalist accumulation is, of course, not quite so simple. As Erik Olin Wright has argued (1978:1390): "Capitalism simultaneously undermines and reproduces racism." The processes of accumulation tend to undermine ethnic differences in the reduction of all labour costs, but the capitalist class attempts to <u>reinforce</u> ethnic divisions within the working class in order to reproduce its dominant class position politically. In spite of this theoretical refinement, Wright also treats ethnicity as the direct effect of capitalist employment practices, thus as necessarily secondary to class relations. While not wishing to lend credence to idealist arguments about the `primordial ties´ of ethnicity, it is important to recognize that ethnic practices are not purely ideological, false consciousness, nor in any way epiphenomenal to material social relations within capitalist societies. Although Marxist theorists posit the salience of racist ideas and practices within the history of European colonialism and uneven capitalist development (following the work of Oliver Cox, 1959), there is a failure to recognize that, through these processes, ethnic relations of inequality have become a constitutive part of capitalist social relations in most capitalist societies and as such have real consequences at the level of political class organization.

In British Columbia, the dominant (white male) fraction of the working class played an active role in the subordination of Asian workers in the workplace and throughout civil society as part of its conflict over wages and working conditions in the province. This cannot be explained solely by reference to the actions of the capitalist class since the working class is active in its own 'making' at the political and ideological levels. Edna Bonacich's model of an ethnically split labour market (1972, 1980) directly challenges the notion that racism within the working class is the creation of the capitalist class and places labour competition at the centre of the creation of an ethnically segmented labour market. According to Bonacich, the logic of capitalist accumulation seeks to drive down the price of labour and an ethnically split labour market results from the differential resources available to dearer and cheaper groups of workers in the struggle to improve wages and working conditions. Although employers do find ethnic cleavages functional for maintaining domination, Bonacich argues (1972:553):

> ...the prejudices of business do not determine the price of labor, darker skinned or culturally different persons being paid less because of them. Rather, business tries to pay as little as possible for labor, regardless of ethnicity, and is held in check by the resources and motives of labor groups. Since these often vary by ethnicity, it is common to find ethnically split labor markets.

While it is important to examine the relations between class fractions as part of the process of ethnic segmentation, Bonacich over-emphasises the role of intra-class conflict while under-emphasising the importance of the conflict between capital and labour and, perhaps most importantly, fails to present an historical account of the emergence in the first place of dearer and cheaper groups of wage labour.[4] Bonacich's model does, however, identify the importance of differential political and economic resources as a key feature of intra- and inter-class conflict.

Other segmented labour market theorists adopt a more historical and structural account of the formation of ethnically segmented labour markets. Edwards (1979) and Gordon, Edwards and Reich (1982) argue that segmented labour markets emerge in the historical context of capitalist development with the formation of separate monopoly and competitive sectors, differential strategies of control in the workplace, changes in productive technology, and, although under-emphasised by these writers, the differential effects of working class struggle across economic sectors. While class struggle within the workplace is taken into account, albeit to a fairly limited extent, these authors ignore the role of the state in creating segmented labour markets (through differential immigration policies, extension of the political franchise, civil rights, etc.), and the repercussions of class struggle within state policies. As Burawoy (1976) has argued, however, the marginal status of migrant workers and, I would add, Asian workers in British Columbia, is maintained largely by their relations with the state, since the absence of legal, political, and civil rights distinguishes Asian non-settlers from white settlers and is reflected in the former's role in the labour market and in their exclusion from working class political organization. This leads us to consider capitalist development and employment practices, state policies, and, particularly, immigration policies and the field of intra- and inter-class struggle emerging in the context of these social relations, as crucial elements in the creation of an ethnically segmented working class in British Columbia.

Asian Immigration and Employment in British Columbia

The demand for large quantities of cheap wage labour in British Columbia began with the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the early

1880s and lasted, apart from a recessionary period following the completion of the railway, through the first decade of the twentieth century (see McDonald, 1981). While skilled labour had to be imported from industrialized countries (such as northern Europe or the United States), unskilled labour could be imported more cheaply from peasant societies. Unskilled labour migrated from Ireland to central Canada in the mid nineteenth century and from the peasant economies of southern, eastern, and central Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Pentland, 1981). In British Columbia, skilled labour was overwhelmingly of British origin. The demand for cheap unskilled labour coincided with the ready availability of cheap peasant labour from China, where economic, social and cultural conditions in the middle of the nineteenth century made emigration in search of wage labour a viable option for poor male peasants. Similar conditions provided a cheap source of labour from Japan beginning in the 1880s and from India around the turn of the twentieth century.

Between 1881 and 1884, the Canadian Pacific Railway imported 15,000 indentured Chinese labourers to construct the British Columbia section of the railway (see Royal Commission, 1855:v). Approximately four thousand Chinese were already in the province (most following the gold rush from California to the Fraser River) but, given the extreme shortage of labour, there was little political agitation against the Chinese prior to railway construction and the subsequent industrialization of the province (see Munro, 1971). Indeed, in the 1860s, Victoria newspapers praised the arrival of the industrious Chinese who filled a demand for domestic and other unskilled labour, although the latter's lifestyle was a constant source of derision (see Li, 1979:323 and Ward, 1978:26-27). The provincial legislature disenfranchised the Chinese and barred them from employment on public works projects in the 1870s and

tried, unsuccessfully, to impose special taxes on Chinese immigrants (see Cheng, 1931; Munro, 1971 and Ward, 1978). Although assumptions about the inferiority of Chinese workers, vis-a-vis immigrants of European origin, were expressed from the earliest period of contact with Chinese in the province, agitation to restrict or exclude Chinese immigrants was not widespread prior to the 1880s.

Over 9,000 Chinese immigrants remained in the province after railway construction ended, labouring in the mines, on farms, on the railway, in sawmills, in salmon canning and as domestic servants (see Royal Commission, 1885:viii;363-365). At the same time, the railway brought increased immigration from Europe, the United States and central Canada, resulting in direct competition between unskilled white labourers and Chinese labourers (see Campbell,1923; Cheng,1931; Royal Commission,1885; and Royal Commission, 1902).[5] Over 11,000 white immigrants migrated to British Columbia in the 18 months between June of 1883 and November 1884 (see Royal Commission, 1885:xlix). Although it is unknown what proportion of these immigrants were unskilled workers or, even, how many remained in the province, this massive increase in manpower, coinciding with the winding down of railway construction, resulted in considerable unemployment among white and Chinese labourers, competition for jobs, and anti-Chinese agitation amongst workers and provincial politicians, all of which factors were instrumental in the creation of the first Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration in 1885.

Competition between white and Chinese workers was a direct result of capitalist employment practices with Chinese (and later Japanese and East Indian) workers earning from one-third to one-half less than unskilled white workers (see Li,1979:326-327;Ward,1978:17;Royal Commission,1885 and Royal Commission,1902). The ability to acquire Chinese workers at such low rates

of pay was premised on the historically lower subsistence level of Asian peasants in comparison to Europeans, the fact that the reproduction costs of Chinese labour were borne in China rather than in Canada, the system of contract labour to hire Chinese workers and, equally as important, the political inferiority accorded Asian immigrants by Canadian immigration policies. By the late nineteenth century, white working class trade union and political activity was an additional factor in the relative cheapness of Asian labour in the province.[6]

An ethnically split labour market was already being formed at the time of the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration. Skilled labour was monopolized by whites and wages earned by skilled workers ranged from $3.50 to $4.50 per day, depending upon the nature of the skilled work (lxx-lxxi). Both whites and Chinese performed unskilled work, but with different rates of pay for the same or similar work. In the mining industry, Chinese labourers earned between $1 and $1.25 per day, while white labourers earned $2 or more (xvi). Chinese cannery workers earned between $25 and $35 per month, while whites earned between $30 and $40 (xxv). Chinese labourers in road construction earned between $15 and $20 per month in comparison to $40 paid to whites (xl). And general labourers earned $1.25 per day if Chinese and between $2 and $2.50 if white (lxxi). The labour market was not only ethnically split in terms of wages, it was also ethnically segmented within the workplace. While white workers were hired as individuals, with few exceptions (e.g. Robert Dunsmuir's mines),[7] Chinese workers were hired under contract to a single Chinese labour contractor who mediated language barriers, disciplined the workers, retained a portion of the wage and other essentials at a profit, an arrangement that "necessarily leaves the men a good deal at the mercy of this foreman" (Royal Commission, 1885:81).

By the time of the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, wage differentials had become entrenched and some successful agitation by white workers had narrowed Asian employment areas, most notably in the areas of road construction, railway employment and underground in the mines. There were approximately 16,000 Chinese and 6,000 Japanese in the provincial labour market in 1902 (see Royal Commission,1902:7-8,328,403).[8] Official records of East Indian immigration were not kept until 1904 (see Cheng,1931:138) but, in 1902, the number of East Indians in British Columbia were so few that their presence was not noted in the evidence or the report of 1902. The major areas of Chinese employment in 1902 were mining, the lumber industry, salmon canning, market gardening, domestic service, and laundry and tailoring businesses. A small number of Chinese in market gardening, laundry and tailoring were petty bourgeois merchants renting farm land or business premises and employing their countrymen but the vast majority of the Chinese engaged in these industries were employees (see Royal Commission,1902:1-279 and Cheng,1931:194). With the exception of work in the canning industry, where Chinese performed semi-skilled job functions and were considered irreplaceable prior to the introduction of mechanization, Chinese labourers were unskilled and all were seasonally transient in the provincial resource economy. The majority of Japanese in the province were engaged as fishermen. Japanese fishermen during this period cannot, however, be considered independent commodity producers, given that they fished under the `attached system´ and were tied to the packing companies owning the boats and equipment used by the fishermen (see Knight and Koizumi, 1976). Japanese wage labourers were also employed as unskilled workers in the lumber industry and, to a lesser extent, in mining (see Royal Commission,1902:340-397).

Wage differentials between Asians and white wage labourers had changed little since the 1880s. Due to the later entry of the Japanese into the provincial labour market, they competed with the Chinese for jobs in lumbering and, to a lesser extent, in mining, often accepting lower wages than the Chinese. The major difference in wages, however, remained between white and Asian workers in general. In the sawmills, Chinese labour earned between $1 and $1.50 per day, the Japanese earned between 90 cents and $1.25, while unskilled white wages started at $2 and went up to $4.50 per day for skilled white labour (Royal Commission,1902:101-124,360-365). Wages were similar in the logging camps, where Japanese workers averaged $1 per day, Chinese workers $1.25, and whites from $2.25 to $3.75 (101-124). In the mining industries, Chinese labourers earned between $1 and $1.50 per day, unskilled white labour earned between $2.50 and $3.00, while white miners earned between $3 and $5 per day (72-96). Few Japanese were employed in mining, but evidence is cited of Japanese miner´s helpers earning 90 cents a day (372). White boys received higher or equivalent wages than Asians in the mines, averaging $1.50 a day as helpers (372).

Another major area of Chinese employment was salmon canning, where wages were high but work lasted only six or seven weeks. The Chinese averaged $25 to $30 per month, but could earn up to $75, while whites earned an average of $75 to $80 and sometimes as much as $100 a month during the canning season. Semi-skilled Chinese can makers earned between $50 and $60 per month during the height of the fishing season. In the canning industry the Chinese were in competition with native women and boys for employment while white men served as foremen (135-164). Chinese domestics earned between $10 and $30 per month with private families and from $25 to $45 in hotels. In contrast, white girls received between $12 and $15 per month and were generally

considered unreliable (167-171). In market gardening, laundry and tailoring businesses, Chinese workers were employed by Chinese merchants in competition with white businesses employing white workers. By the turn of the century market gardening was dominated by the Chinese, with Chinese labourers earning $18 to $19 per month plus board. On white-owned farms, Chinese labourers earned $20 to $25 per month (without board) and whites earned $30 to $40 (55-65). The Chinese also dominated the laundry business, with wages between $8 and $18 per month plus board. Automated steam laundries run by whites competed with Chinese, labour-intensive laundries, paying their employees between $10 and $15 a week for white men, and between $4 and $7.50 a week for white girls and women (175). Chinese tailors earned from $25 to $35 a month, while white men earned $12 per week and white women earned $6 per week. For the most part, Chinese tailors hired Chinese employees and white tailors hired white employees (177).

The major Japanese employer was the fishing industry, with nearly 4,000 Japanese fishermen in 1901 (355). Fishing was the only area where remuneration was the same for Asian and white workers, since the price for fish did not vary between the different ethnic groups. This apparent equality was tempered by gear and area restrictions on Japanese fishermen that did not apply to white and native fishermen (see Knight and Koizumi,1976), and the contract system of employment. The Japanese did not own the boats and equipment used in fishing, as white and native fishermen usually did, so the Japanese were tied to an agreement with specific fish packing companies and received only a share of the fish profits. Moreover, while packing companies dealt with white and native fishermen as individuals, Japanese fishermen were under contract to a Japanese labour contractor, a system which lowered the wages of individual workers (340-357). The Japanese

had begun to dominate the boat building industry by the turn of the century. In boat building plants owned and run by whites, white labour earned between $3 and $4 per day for skilled labour and from $1.25 to $2.50 for boys doing the unskilled labour. The wages for Japanese workers in Japanese-owned boat building operations are unknown, but since the Japanese undersold white boat builders by more than fifty per cent ($60 for a Japanese built boat compared to $150 for a white built boat), wages must have been comparable with or below those paid to white boys (387-359).

By the mid 1920s, a shift was occurring in the occupational distribution and the class structure of the Asian communities. Although an estimated eighty per cent of the over 40,000 Chinese and nearly 10,000 Japanese workers in British Columbia continued to labour for wages, by the middle of the 1920s a significant minority of the Chinese and the Japanese had moved into the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie (see Cheng,1931 and Creese,1984). More Chinese became involved in truck farming, small restaurants, laundries and grocery stores. A significant number of Japanese became independent commodity producers in fruit and berry farming in the Okanagan and Fraser Valley, while others became retail merchants (see Adachi,1976; Cheng,1931 and Roy,1980). This movement into commerce was directly related to successful white working class agitation to limit Japanese involvement in the fishing industry. The federal government halved the number of Japanese fishing licences in the early 1920s and attempted to further limit Chinese and Japanese employment in mining, railways, and public works projects. The result was that mining was no longer a major employer for the Chinese and although over 1,000 Japanese remained fishermen (most of whom now owned their own boats and equipment), this was only one-quarter of those previously engaged as fishermen (see Cheng,1931:163-197). The lumber industry, however,

remained an important source of employment for all Asians, absorbing one-fifth of Chinese labourers, one-third of Japanese labourers and a full nine-tenths of the approximately 1,000 East Indians in the provincial labour market in the mid 1920s (see Cheng,1931:157,166,197).[9] The growth of ethnic businesses not only changed the structure of the Chinese and Japanese communities but it meant that a growing number of Asian workers were now employed on farms and in businesses owned by other members of their ethnic communities, creating a labour market which was more clearly ethnically segmented than previously.

Immigration Policies and Class Conflict

The Canadian government never considered Asians suitable settlers for Canada, although it did recognize the short term advantages of plentiful cheap labour to build a sound western economy. As Avery and Neary (1977) point out, the federal government approached Asian immigration differently than it did European and American immigration: "No agents were commissioned, no promotional literature was distributed and no plans were made for the agricultural settlement of Orientals" (24-25). In a settler colony, where all non-British immigrants were accorded some form of inferior \`entrance status´ (see Porter,1965), Asians shared the unique distinction of a \`non-settler´ status accorded by the Canadian government. The non-settler status of Asians is clearly expressed in the report of the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration and, more virulently, in the report of the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration.

In 1885, the Chinese were referred to, quite positively, as "living machines" (70) who had advanced the development of British Columbia by fifty years through their labour on the Canadian Pacific Railway (78). They were

not, however, desirable as settlers because they were perceived to be inferior to Europeans. The whole issue of Chinese immigration was evaluated on the basis of whether their positive economic role had other negative effects within the province:

> The question was not, should Chinese immigration be encouraged, but should the coming of the Chinese into the country be prevented. Had it been injurious or not? (1)

The conclusion reached by the commission was that Chinese immigration had not been injurious to the province since claims about their hazard to health and their disreputable lifestyle were greatly exaggerated and, most important, because the Chinese did not compete with permanent settlers for employment:

> The evidence and the Official Returns show that this Chinese competition is not with skilled labour or with agricultural settlers, or persons intending to become permanent residents in the country, but (with) migratory transitory labourers, who may or may not become settlers, dependent upon ulterior circumstances. (lxxi-lxxii)

While white labourers might be considered non-settlers due to `ulterior circumstances,´ the Chinese were considered non-settlers simply on the basis of their racial origin. Chinese workers were not perceived as a threat to the development of the white community in the province as long as they competed only with white migrants and not with permanent settlers. Employers who gave evidence praised Chinese labour for its industriousness, dependability, cheapness, sobriety and docility, in comparison to the militancy, union organizing, strikes in pursuit of higher wages and the `blue Monday´ syndrome prevalent among many white workers. With only one exception, employers and managers appreciated the presence of Chinese labour but did not endorse their permanent settlement nor support their being granted the political rights of citizenship.[10] The general consensus was that the immigration of Chinese should be regulated to ensure that no more

came to the province than were necessary for the economy. There was a clear division of opinion, however, between employers of labour and the views of the working class who considered the Chinese a direct threat to their livelihoods and sought the exclusion of Asians from the province. As one witness stated:

> My experience is that the general agitation is from those who are dependent on their labour, but as soon as they get a piece of land and want it improved, or become employers themselves, they then are the first to employ the Chinese (103).

Working class organization against the Chinese first occurred in Victoria and the Vancouver Island coal mining districts where competition with the Chinese began in the late 1870s. The Workingman´s Protective Association was formed in Victoria in 1878 to provide the "mutual protection of the working class of B.C. against the great influx of Chinese; to use all legitimate means for the suppression of their immigration; to assist each other in the obtaining of employment; and to devise means for the amelioration of the condition of the working class of this Province in general" (quoted in Phillips,1967:9). In the Vancouver Island coal mines, anti-Chinese labour demands first emerged in 1883 as a safety issue following claims that the Chinese failure to understand English caused mining accidents but, after the repeated use of Chinese strikebreakers in the Dunsmuir mines, a general demand for the exclusion of the Chinese became a standard feature of coal miner´s labour strategy (see Phillips,1967 and Morton,1974). In the mid-1880s, demands for the exclusion of the Chinese formed a major platform for the organizing drive of the Knights of Labour and contributed to its success in the province (see Phillips,1967 and Ward,1978). In its submission to the 1885 Royal Commission, the Knights of Labour vigourously condemned the effect that cheap Chinese labour was having on white workers in what would become the standard trade union criticism of Chinese immigration:

> Chinese labour is confessedly of a low, degraded, and servile type, the inevitable result of whose employment in competition with free white labour is to lower and degrade the latter without any appreciable elevation of the former. Their standard of living is reduced to the lowest possible point, and, being without family ties, or any of those institutions which are essential to the existence and progress of our civilization, they are enabled to not only live but to grow rich on wages far below the lowest minimum at which we can possibly exist. They are thus fitted to become all too dangerous competitors in the labour market, while their docile servility, the natural outcome of centuries of grinding poverty and humble submission to a most oppressive system of government, renders them doubly dangerous as the willing tools whereby grasping and tyrannical employers grind down all labour to the lowest living point. It is for this latter reason, chiefly, that we object to the Chinese, not altogether because they accept lower wages (156).

The outcome of this Royal Commission was the imposition of a $50 head tax on all Chinese labourers coming to Canada, excluding Chinese students, merchants, and diplomats (see Cheng,1931 and Ward,1978).

As the Japanese began to immigrate to British Columbia in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the white working class began to include the Japanese in its anti-Asian agitation. By the 1890s, the white working class had broadened its anti-Asian activities from individual job sites to the political sphere by running labour representatives in the provincial and federal elections. In 1898, five labour representatives were elected to the legislature where they managed to enact legislation banning Asians from underground employment in the mines (see Phillips,1967 and Schwantes,1979). With 16,000 Chinese and 6,000 Japanese in the labour market at the turn of the twentieth century, labour conflict and working class political pressure led the federal government to raise the Chinese head tax to $100 and to establish another Royal Commission into the issue of Asian immigration in 1902. The outcome of the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration was the raising of the Chinese head tax to $500 in 1903 and the endorsement of Japanese immigration restriction (see Cheng, 1931 and Royal Commission, 1902).

Compared with the 1885 Royal Commission, the 1902 Commission was decidedly hostile in tone. It more clearly distinguished the `nonassimilable´ Asians from the `actual settlers´ in the province, considered `permanent citizens´ simply on the basis of their European origin. It is worth quoting at some length from the conclusions of the 1902 Royal Commission to illustrate the view of Asians that was encompassed in the discriminatory immigration policies and racist laws of the Canadian state (at the federal <u>and</u> provincial levels):

> If the end to be sought is the building up of the nation, and not the exploitation of these resources, the one vital interest to be secured above all others is an immigration of settlers of whom we may hope to make Canadians, in the highest and best sense of that word...How far do the Chinese of the labour or coolie class approach to this standard? They come from southern China, drawn from the poorer classes, reared in poverty where a few cents a day represent the earnings which must suffice for a family; accustomed to crowd together in small tenements or huts, close, unhealthy and filthy; with customs, habits and modes of life fixed and unalterable, resulting from an ancient and effete civilization, with no desire to conform to western ideas. They form, on their arrival, a community within a community, separate and apart, a foreign substance within, but not of our body politic, with no love for our laws and institutions; a people that will not assimilate or become an integral part of our race and nation. With their habits of overcrowding, and an utter disregard of all sanitary laws, they are a continual menace to health. From a moral and social point of view, living as they do without home life, schools or churches, and so nearly approaching a servile class, their effect upon the rest of the community is bad. They pay no fair proportion of the taxes of the country. They keep out immigrants who would become permanent citizens, and create conditions inimical to labour and dangerous to the industrial peace of the community where they come. They spend little of their earnings in the country and trade chiefly with their own people. They fill the places that ought to be occupied by permanent citizens, many of whom leave the country on their account. They are unfit for full citizenship, and are permitted to take no part in municipal or provincial government. Upon this point there was entire unanimity. They are not and will not become citizens in any sense of the term as we understand it. They are so nearly allied to a servile class that they are obnoxious to a free community and dangerous to the state (277-278).
> (A)ll that has been said in this regard with reference to the Chinese applies with equal, if not greater force, to the Japanese. The consensus of opinion of the people of British Columbia is that they do not and cannot assimilate with white people, and that while in some respects they are less undesirable than the Chinese, in that

> they adopt more readily our habits of life and spend more of their earnings in the country, yet in all that goes to make for the permanent settlement of the country they are quite as serious a menace as the Chinese and keener competitors against the working man, and as they have more energy, push and independence, more dangerous in this regard than the Chinese (397).

Working class views concerning Asian immigration had remained much the same as those articulated by the Knights of Labour in 1885. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, labour was better organized in trade unions and, politically, had achieved some success in electing labour candidates to the provincial legislature. The white working class was, then, in a stronger position to affect immigration policies regarding Asians. The major distinction between the findings of the 1885 and 1902 Royal Commissions, however, was the general consensus among employers that there was already an abundant supply of Asians in the province to fulfil the needs of cheap labour and that their immigration ought now to be drastically reduced. Two things should be noted about the restriction of Chinese (and later Japanese) immigrants. First, it was Asian labourers rather than all Asians who were restricted and taxed. Immigration restrictions did not apply to merchants (although these were rather narrowly defined), students or diplomats (see Cheng,1931). Second, the massive expansion of an unskilled labour force was beginning to slow down by the turn of the twentieth century, thus the more drastic restrictions on Asian immigration, which began in 1902 and culminated in the mid 1920s, coincided with a change in the needs of the labour market (see McDonald,1981).

Restrictions on Japanese immigration were not long in coming.[11] Riots against Asian immigration, sparked by rumours of the imminent arrival of thousands of Japanese and East Indian immigrants in Vancouver during September of 1907, helped convince the Japanese government to voluntarily

restrict the emigration of Japanese labourers to Canada. In 1908, a 'Gentlemen's Agreement' to limit the emigration of labourers to Canada to 400 per year was reached with Japan. This agreement did, however, allow the wives and children of Japanese in Canada to emigrate without restriction, giving rise to the picture-bride system of Japanese marriages with the result that families soon became a common feature of Japanese community life in British Columbia (see Adachi,1976:85-92 and Cheng,1931:126-132). East Indian immigration was halted in 1908, after about 5,000 had arrived (since 1904), with special legislation requiring potential immigrants to arrive in Canada by continuous journey from their country of origin (see Cheng,1931:139). Since there were no direct shipping routes from India to Canada, further immigration effectively ceased after a few attempts to circumvent the legislation (see Ward,1978).

In the context of economic depression and unemployment following demobilization, the campaign to end Asian immigration grew again after the First World War. Organized labour was joined by soldiers and merchant groups in the formation of the Asiatic Exclusion League in 1921 (see Phillips,1967:88). The spread of Asian economic competition into sectors of the petty bourgeoisie had a corresponding effect on broadening anti-Asian agitation. As Patricia Roy writes:

> Before World War I labour organizations were in the forefront of anti-Asian agitation; by the 1920s and 1930s, farmers and retail merchants were often the most prominent objectors to the presence of Asians, their lower standard of living, and willingness to work longer and harder for lower returns than white men (1980:168).

In response to the political agitation of white workers and merchants within British Columbia, the Chinese Immigration Act was passed in 1923, ending the further immigration of Chinese labourers; the 'Gentlemen's Agreement' was amended in 1923 to limit the emigration of Japanese labourers to Canada to

150 a year, and the picture-bride system of Japanese marriages was abolished in 1928 (see Cheng,1931).

Discussion

Asian immigrants were accorded an inferior `non-settler´ status within Canadian civil society, denied the political franchise at all levels of government and legally or institutionally barred from some sectors of employment. State policies thus contributed to the Asians´ marginal economic status within the labour market. Immigration policies and capitalist employment practices were initially premised on the national and peasant origin of Asian immigrants with an historically low subsistence level resulting in cheap wage labour and legitimized through the racist ideologies of British colonialism. In order to maintain the marginal economic role of Asians as cheap wage labour in the long term, however, maintenance of their second-class immigration status and lack of political rights was essential. Asian workers were placed in a position of economic and political inferiority vis-à-vis white workers, such that the resources utilized by white workers organizing for better wages, working conditions, job security, socialist politics and changes in Asian immigration policies were largely absent for Asian workers.

Peter Li (1979) has argued that the non-citizen status of the Chinese (and, by analogy, Japanese and East Indians) was a solution to capital´s problem of maintaining "the marginal status of a group whose labour was necessary for economic expansion" (324). While there is no doubt that maintaining economic marginality was an effect of subordinate political status for Asian workers, we should not assume an identity of cause and effect. State policies were indeed defined within the context of capitalist social relations. Immigration policies were specifically defined within the

context of labour market requirements and it is precisely for this reason that immigration policies became a focus of class conflict in British Columbia. The denial of the political franchise and the right to work in certain sectors of the economy, combined with the progressively more stringent restrictions and taxes on Asian immigration, occurred through pressure by the working class and small businessmen rather than at the behest of capitalists in British Columbia, in spite of the fact that these political restrictions might be in the long term interests of capital.

Although political divisions over the issue of Asian immigration were clearly drawn on the basis of class, there was considerable agreement about the undesirability of Asians as permanent settlers based on assumptions about the latter´s inferiority. Assumptions about Chinese (and later Japanese and East Indian) inferiority legitimized claims about their nonassimilability. Furthermore, as Chan (1983) argues, the absence of women and children within the Chinese (the East Indian and early Japanese) communities was considered proof that Asians had no intention to settle permanently within the country. The denial of political rights was premised on the non-settler status of Asians that was in turn premised on these assumptions about their nonassimilability and inferiority. When the Japanese began to bring wives to, and raise families in, British Columbia, assumptions about their nonassimilability did not change, however, and political rights continued to be denied regardless of citizen status. We must, therefore, consider the material context within which racist attitudes toward Asians were produced and perpetuated and the role that sate-accorded political inferiority played in this process.

Ward (1978) argues that racist stereotypes about the Chinese were the product of European (particularly British) concepts about the `Chinese

character' and California 'Sinophobia' brought to British Columbia by the miners following the Fraser River gold rush in the 1860s (4-14). Ward does not, however, root the salience of these stereotypes within the context of the social relations of Chinese contact under conditions of European colonialism in Asia and in North America. The role of the Chinese, and other Asians, in the development of North America was to provide an extremely cheap, unskilled, male labour force. Assumptions about the inferiority and nonassimilability of Asians that emerged during the colonial period were reaffirmed in British Columbia by the presence of Asian workers at the bottom of the class structure in economic and cultural ghettoes, a situation which legitimized and generated racial stereotypes. The social organization of Asian peasants into the lowest ranks of the working class was the product of two factors: i) the cheapness of Asian labour (premised on the historically lower subsistence levels of Asian peasants in comparison to Europeans, the contract labour system, labour reproduction costs borne in Asia rather than in Canada, political inferiority accorded by the Canadian state, and white working class organization excluding Asian labour) and ii) the presence of racial hostility (formed under the conditions of British colonialism and uneven capitalist development) which facilitated the formation of cohesive ethnic communities as acts of inclusion for economic links, mutual aid and sociability, and as acts of exclusion against a racist dominant society.

Within the context of the economic and political inferiority of Asian workers, the white working class marshalled its superior economic and political resources in the labour market and in the political arena for protection against cheaper Asian labour as part of the general struggle against capitalist employment practices in the province. White working class labour organization was two-pronged, seeking protection from cheap labour

competition and strikebreaking by excluding Asians, while at the same time seeking to raise its standard of living and job security through collective bargaining rights that would weaken the power of capitalists in the province. Exclusionary rather than inclusionary labour organization was not the automatic outcome of wage differentials in an ethnically split labour market; it emerged in the context of the inferior political status of the cheaper labour group within civil society (with the denial of political rights and citizen or settler status). Asian workers lacked the necessary resources to combat employment practices and state policies that maintained their marginality. Although racist attitudes about the inferiority of Asians are not irrelevant to anti-Asian labour organization, the salience of these racist ideologies and practices should be understood within the context of productive social relations in the province that ghettoized Asians economically, politically, and culturally.

Paul Phillips has argued that the presence of cheaper Asian labour in British Columbia "stimulated labour political organization, militancy and class conflict" among white workers as immigration became a class issue in the province (1967:163). The radical nature of trade union and political organization in British Columbia during this period is well documented by Phillips and others, but, as working class consciousness formed and directed political and trade union actions, it took an ethnically fragmented form. The history of militant working class action in the province is the history of white male workers and much of it was explicitly racist (and sexist)[12] in content. White working class practices directed against Asian workers did not, however, represent a lack of class consciousness. Class conscious practices took an ethnically fragmented form in the context of ethnic relations of inequality, as a constitutive part of capitalist social

relations in British Columbia. Working class anti-Asian agitation had the contradictory effect of both strengthening and weakening the position of white labour. While it bolstered labour militancy and the economic and political position of white workers in the long-term, it worked against labour by contributing to the development and entrenchment of an ethnically segmented labour market. Exclusionary, rather than inclusionary, labour organization weakened the strength of labour as a whole (including Asians).

I do not wish to suggest that Asian workers were absent from labour struggles in the province, but, rather, that they were much less frequently involved in labour organization and strikes than white workers and that this organization also took place in ethnically segmented forms. Chinese workers in Victoria were involved in a strike as early as 1877, although no details of the strike are recorded (see Royal Commission,1885:lxi). Chinese cannery workers struck in 1881, and Japanese fishermen were involved in a series of strikes beginning in 1893, and again in 1900, 1901, and 1904 (see Knight and Koizumi,1976:105-107). In all of these strikes, Asian, native and white workers were organized within separate bodies and the absence of unified labour organization allowed employers to exploit ethnic divisions to break the strikes. Asian workers possessed fewer economic and political resources than white workers to successfully engage in labour struggles, particularly when much white labour organization included anti-Asian demands. Ethnic community organization provided Asian workers with the solidarity that working class organization did not, such as providing organs of political expression in Canada, links for jobs through ethnic labour contractors and employers, a supply of cheap loyal labour for petty bourgeois ethnic enterprises (and perhaps for upward mobility after the First World War),[13] social services unavailable from the dominant community and an integrative

social and cultural context which was particularly important in the absence of families for all but the Japanese after 1908. In turn, ethnic community solidarity contributed to the absence of labour militancy among Asian workers, since they usually worked under ethnic labour contractors or, increasingly after 1920, for ethnic employers. In contrast to white workers' labour militancy, Asian workers were relatively docile employees.[14] Indeed, these are not unrelated responses, as the various fractions of the working class 'handle' their experiences in an ethnically segmented labour market within a racist capitalist society.

Questions about the primacy of class or ethnic cleavages in British Columbia (or elsewhere) are misplaced. Ethnic conflict was not, as Ward argues (1978,1980), an outcome of the "social psychology of race relations" that relegated class conflict to a secondary role within British Columbia. Nor was it, as Warburton argues (1981), simply a reflection of class cleavages. Ethnic relations of inequality were, and are, a constitutive part of capitalist social relations within British Columbia. The articulation of class and ethnic relations can only be assessed through an historical analysis of the field of social relations in that province. Working class practices were situated within capitalist social relations which were explicitly racist in form, generating an ethnically segmented labour market and a politically and ideologically ethnically segmented working class.

Conclusions

The formation of an ethnically segmented working class in British Columbia occurred through a complex and reciprocal process of ethnic segmentation within the labour market and the political and ideological practices of the working class. Differential capitalist employment practices

were essential for the formation of a segmented labour market, but employment practices occurred in the broader context of social relations in the province. The historical conditions of labour migration, uneven capitalist development, Canadian immigration policies and other racist laws, the exclusionary practices of the white working class, the formation of ghettoized ethnic communities, and racist ideologies generated by and legitimating these practices, contributed to and were facilitated by the creation and maintenance of an ethnically segmented labour market in the province.

State immigration policies played a crucial role in the creation of an ethnically segmented working class, economically, politically, and ideologically, becoming a forum of class struggle in British Columbia. Political and ideological ethnic segmentation occurred not as the automatic outcome of wage differences between dearer white and cheaper Asian workers, but in the context of the inferior political status accorded Asians by the Canadian state that made the possibilities of successful labour militancy much more likely for whites than for Asians, and which legitimated the white workers' exclusion of a group already defined as inferior by the state. Asian immigration became a major organizing focus for white workers in British Columbia, fostering class consciousness and political intervention. The focus of the political intervention, and much of the labour organization within the workplace, was anti-Asian in content, yet was contextualized, quite consciously, in terms of the struggle between capital and labour in the province. Given the social organization of 'non-citizen' Asians into the lowest sectors of the working class, the political organization and consciousness of that class was ethnically fragmented and racist in form.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Don Black, Wallace Clement, Dennis Olsen, Daiva Stasiulis and Frank Vallee for providing valuable comments and criticisms on the work in progress that has contributed to this paper.

2. For discussions of working class radicalism in British Columbia see Bercuson (1977), Pentland (1979), Phillips (1967,1973), McCormack (1977) and Schwantes (1979). For discussions of anti-Asian racism within the working class see Pentland (1979), Phillips (1967,1981), Roy (1976,1980) and Ward (1978,1980).

3. This paper forms part of ongoing research for my dissertation, "Working Class Politics, Racism and Sexism: The Development of a Segmented Working Class in British Columbia, 1880-1939," at Carleton University.

4. I would like to thank Daiva Stasiulis for this formulation of the weaknesses in Bonacich's model of an ethnically split labour market.

5. Throughout this paper I have used the term 'white' in preference to 'Euro-Canadians' in order to stress the importance of the visual racial distinctions in the intra-working class conflict in British Columbia. 'Ethnicity' is used as the generic term for relations of domination and subordination between groups defined socially as sharing a common ancestry based on perceived biological (racial) and/or cultural criteria (see Cox,1959;Bonacich,1972,1980;Hughes and Kallen,1974 and Kallen,1982).

6. The conditions which produced the Chinese as a low wage labour group also apply to Japanese and East Indian workers in British Columbia.

7. In his Vancouver Island coal mines, Robert Dunsmuir employed several hundred Chinese manual workers whom he hired and paid as individual workers. This is the only instance of large-scale Chinese employment that was not carried out under contract to a Chinese labour contractor reported in the 1885 report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (128-129).

8. Although the 1901 Census lists 14,885 Chinese and 4,597 Japanese in British Columbia (see Ward,1978:170-171), the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration in 1902 estimated that there were 16,000 Chinese and 6,000 Japanese in the province.

9. There are less than 100 'other Asians' recorded in British Columbia in the 1901 Census. Although the precise number of East Indians is not known prior to keeping official immigration records in 1904, over 5,000 East Indians arrived in British Columbia in the four years following. Many either moved on to the United States or returned to India because, by 1911, the Census records just over 2,000 East Indians in the province. By the 1920s, only approximately 1,000 East Indian workers remain in British Columbia (see Cheng,1931:138;Ward,1978:170-171).

10. Mine owner Robert Dunsmuir is the only employer interviewed by the Royal Commission who advocated granting the Chinese the political franchise and full citizenship rights under the assumption that this would put an end to the anti-Chinese agitation of white workers (Royal Commission,1885).

11. The `problem´ of Japanese immigration was dealt with more diplomatically than Chinese immigration because Japan was a world military and trading power with whom it was important to maintain cordial relations. China, of course, was divided and weak under colonial rule (see Adachi,1976 and Lyman,1968).
12. Recent research in British Columbia has pointed out the sex-blind nature of traditional labour history and has begun to document the sexist nature of trade union activity within the working class (see Campbell,1979,1980; Rosenthal,1979 and Bernard,1982).

13. Bonacich and Modell (1980) document the role economic factors played in forming and maintaining ethnic solidarity in American Japanese communities. Their work suggests several lines of investigation that could be followed in British Columbia, particularly the relationship between the use of cheap Asian labour and the success of ethnic business enterprises, and the relationship between `middlemen minorities´ and the dominant society. Li (1979) suggests that there is a direct link between the formation of ethnic businesses and institutional racism as well.

14. More research needs to be done concerning the specific conditions which generated Asian labour militancy and docility, exclusionary white labour struggles and inclusionary joint action by whites and Asian workers. This paper constitutes a general outline of the economic and political context within which class action took place and the broad trends of working class action as white workers played an active role in the economic and political subordination of ethnic workers.

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