Document A: Pioneer Laundry Workers Flyer (Modified)

The document below is an 1878 flyer by the Pioneer Laundry Workers Assembly in Washington D.C. The group was part of the Knights of Labor, an influential labor union in the United States at the time.

MEN FROM CHINA come here to do LAUNDRY WORK. The Chinese Empire contains 600,000,000 inhabitants.

The supply of these men is inexhaustible. Every [Chinese man] doing this work takes BREAD from the mouths of OUR WOMEN. So many have come of late, that to keep at work, they are obliged to cut prices. . . .

Will you oblige the AMERICAN LAUNDRIES to CUT THE WAGES OF THEIR PEOPLE by giving your patronage to the CHINAMEN? We invite you to give a thorough investigation of the STEAM LAUNDRY BUSINESS of the country; in doing so you will find that not only does it EMPLOY A VAST NUMBER OF WOMEN, but a great field of labor is opened to a great number of mechanics of all kinds whose wages are poured back into the trade of the country.

If this undesirable element "THE CHINESE EMIGRANTS" are not stopped coming here, we have no alternative but that we will have California and the Pacific Slope's experience, and the end will be that our jobs will be eliminated UNLESS we live down to their animal life.

We say in conclusion that the CHINAMAN takes labor from our country without the returning prosperity to our land the way the labor of our labor does to our glorious country.

Our motto should be: OUR COUNTRY, OUR PEOPLE, GOD, AND OUR NATIVE LAND.

Source: 1878 flyer by the Pioneer Laundry Workers Assembly.

Vocabulary
inexhaustible: unlimited
oblige: force
patronage: business
Chinaman: a term for someone from China that is now outdated and offensive
Pacific Slope: the American West
Document B: New York Herald (Modified)

A financial crisis triggered a “panic” in 1873, and a six-year economic depression followed.

Effect of the Panic: Trade and Transportation Unusually Dull.

The express companies are suffering very materially from the crisis. . . . The Southern steamers and the railroads that generally do a large business in carrying freight to the West are experiencing the effects of the panic in a way that is proving quite unprofitable. . . .

The sales of houses have not been numerous enough of late to be worth talking about. . . .

There has been a large diminution in the business of importing. It results not less from the unwillingness on the part of importers to form new contracts than from the decrease on the part of the consumer and the retailer. In other words, the crisis seems to have taught a widespread lesson—a little economy and less extravagance. . . . The country will lose from the depression of the retail trade many millions of dollars. When so many hundred thousand people are thrown out of employment, and money becomes stringent, a drop in the overall economy will occur. . . .

The decline in cotton prices has been continuous. . . .

The grocery trade has suffered severely in consequence of the panic. . . .

Source: New York Herald, Tuesday, November 4, 1873.

Vocabulary

diminution: reduction

economy: tight budgeting

retailer: seller of goods

stringent: scarce
Document C: Congressional Testimony of California Attorney General (Excerpted)

The burden of our accusation against them is that they come in conflict with our labor interests; that they can never assimilate with us; that they are a perpetual, unchanging, and unchangeable alien element that can never become homogeneous; that their civilization is demoralizing and degrading to our people; that they degrade and dishonor labor; that they can never become citizens; and that an alien, degraded labor class, without desire of citizenship, without education, and without interest in the country it inhabits, is an element both demoralizing and dangerous to the community within which it exists

Source: Frank Pixley, former Attorney General of California, in testimony to the Joint Committee of the two Houses of Congress on Chinese Immigration, October 21, 1876.

Vocabulary

assimilate: become like

homogeneous: the same, alike
Document D: Wong Ar Chong’s Letter (Modified)

Wong Ar Chong was a Chinese American tea merchant in Boston. He wrote this letter to William Lloyd Garrison, a prominent abolitionist and social reformer. Garrison had publicly debated Senator James G. Blaine of Maine, arguing against the senator’s support for banning Chinese immigration.

The able Senator from Maine says the Chinese must go. . . . I claim for my countrymen the right to come to this country as long as other foreigners do. . . .

The Honorable Senator calls us heathens, but I should judge from the tone of his letter that he was somewhat lacking in Christian charity. Let him look at the records of fire in Chicago and yellow fever in New Orleans, and he will find Chinamen giving as much as any other people.

He says that China people pay no taxes in this country, but I think if he will look into the matter he will find that they pay as much taxes in California as any other foreigners. . . .

He says that China people are not healthy, do not keep their places as clean as other people, that they smell badly, etc. I could mention several other nationalities, each having its own particular smell. . . . If the Chinese are allowed to come to this country and enjoy the same privileges as the people from any other foreign land, they will educate themselves and conform to your laws and manners and become as good citizens as any other race. . . .

The Chinese must not be blamed because other men have no work. It is not their fault. If merchants carried on business within their means, instead of failing and going through bankruptcy, then laboring men would have plenty of steady work.


Vocabulary

heathens: derogatory word for people who aren’t Christian
Chinaman: a term for someone from China that is now outdated and offensive
bankruptcy: financial failure