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THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT.  
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16th Ill. District.

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REPEAL OF THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT.

It was John Sutter who brought John Chinaman. When Sutter discovered gold in California in 1849, the gold-rush soon developed a need for labor and Chinese coolies were contracted to come to the United States. Low living standards made low wages possible and soon brought protests in the form of local legislation which was declared invalid. California citizens then appealed to Congress to exclude Chinese stating that they were an inferior race in morals and physique, they could not be assimilated, they worked for a pittance, they were dominated by the six large tongs and that they became a secret government within a government.

FEDERAL ACTION BEGINS.

In February 1879, Congress passed a bill limiting the number of Chinese who could be brought to the U S on any single ship but the bill was vetoed by President Hayes as against our treaty obligations and the effort to pass it over the veto failed. In 1881, a treaty was negotiated with China, giving the U.S. the power to limit or suspend immigration of Chinese laborers but not to completely prohibit it. This bill also protected those Chinese already here. In 1882, Congress passed another bill prohibiting the immigration of Chinese to the U.S. but this measure was vetoed by President Arthur. Later, the bill was modified, passed, and approved. In July 1884, this act was further amended to suspend the immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years and to require all other Chinese to have certificates. Since then, the matters of Chinese exclusion has continued in a controversial status.

HOW MANY ARE HERE.

As early as 1860, there were 34,933 Chinese in the U S. The number increased until 1890 when it reached 107,488. Since then, it has declined to 77,504 in 1940 and of this number 40,262 were born in the United States and 37,242 in China.

THE LITERATURE OF AGITATION.

Popular literature can have a devastating effect, in developing a certain conception of other peoples and no author was more influential in this field than Bret Harte, the California author and poet, whose quaint verse had wide currency. It was he who wrote in 1870,

"When I wish to remark-  
And my language is plain-  
That for ways that are dark  
And for tricks that are vain,  
The heathen Chinese is peculiar "

EXCLUSION BECOMES A POLITICAL ISSUE.

To exclude or not to exclude Chinese soon became a political issue and all political parties adopted platform planks on the subject. As early as 1884, the Democratic National Platform stated that "American civilization demands that against the immigration or importation of Mongolians to these shores, our gates be closed." The Republican platform in the same year denounced the importation of contract labor and recited that "we pledge ourselves to sustain the present law restricting Chinese immigration and to provide such further legislation as is necessary to carry out its purposes." For many years, virtually every political party carried similar planks in their platforms.

THE SITUATION IN 1943.

More than 70 years have gone by since the agitation to exclude the Chinese first began. Things have changed. China is now a Republic. She is now our ally in a world-wide war. We have supplied her with lend-lease goods valued at hundreds of millions of dollars. Japanese propaganda has sought to weaken Chinese devotion to the United Nations by pointing out that under U.S. laws, Chinese are still excluded from this country. It is effective propaganda. All this brought about a new interest in the Chinese exclusion law and produced a bill for its repeal so that China will have an immigration quota somewhat like that of other nations. The number who could be admitted under the new act would be about 107 persons per year.

OBJECTIONS.

Some labor organizations are opposed to the bill. Perhaps it should be pointed out that the original reason for the Chinese Exclusion Act was that coolies were being brought to the U.S. as contract labor and that there are very rigid statutes on the books today which deal with all forms of contract labor.