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EDITORIAL

WHY EXCLUDE THE CHINESE?

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THE press of this country is now engaged in a little insidious propaganda work in the interest of the capitalist class. It appears in the shape of brief news items, editorials and letters relating to Chinese labor, and is either impliedly or openly in favor of its admission to this country. A letter typical of this propaganda appeared in a recent issue of the Cincinnati *Commercial Tribune*. It is headed “Why exclude the Chinese?” and is written by an employer, judging from its tone and contents. This letter claims:

“There is a constant demand for unskilled labor, and that demand is growing. True, there are vast numbers of idle men who are unwilling to perform common labor and will rather depend on the pittance drawn from the unions, and that in the face of the fact that unskilled, or common labor, pays the highest wages in the history of this or any other country * * * The Chinese will supply this demand * * *”

Leaving aside the false claim regarding “the vast numbers of idle men who are unwilling to perform common labor”—a claim that is refuted by the statistics of every employment bureau showing the number of skilled workmen applying for “anything” to do—leaving aside the false claim regarding “the highest wages” etc.,—a claim that Thorold Rogers’ *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* proves unfounded—this quotation is invaluable. It reflects the vital reason for favoring Chinese admission. The capitalists of this country are not only under the necessity of admitting the Chinese in order to avoid the retaliation that would injure their export trade with the Chinese, but they are also under the necessity of admitting them in order that they may compete successfully for that very trade. With this end in view they are driving further the tendency of capitalism to send wages down to the level of the coolie. The wages of labor being regulated by the supply and demand

of labor, the capitalist class realize that they have but to further increase the supply and wages—"the highest wages in the history of this or any other country"—will instantly drop further down toward those of the Chinese coolie. With such results attained in the case of unskilled labor, a drop in wages for skilled labor will follow, for it will not be long before the unskilled will be forced, in order to live, to compete for the jobs of the "skilled," with the effects mentioned. Then will the capitalist class of this country not only be enabled to propitiate the Chinese, but to compete successfully in the great markets of the Orient, with the capitalist class of other nations, who, like those of England, also look with favor upon "industrious," "frugal," "peaceful" and cheap coolie labor. No wonder they ask "Why exclude the Chinese?"

To the working class the Chinese question is but another of the questions growing out of the merchandise—the wage slave—character of labor. Abolish that and the Chinese question is abolished with it. In order to do this capitalism must be overthrown and Socialism inaugurated.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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