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THE CONTROVERSY OVER CHINESE
LABOUR IN THE TRANSVAAL

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
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* * * * * * *

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1968

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CHAPTER I

THE CASE FOR CHINESE LABOUR

In 1885 a new gold field equalling or surpassing those of California was discovered on the Witwatersrand, literally Ridge of the White Waters, in South Africa. This field differed from others in that the mineral was not in nuggets to be picked up by the prospector, but deep ore requiring huge appropriations of capital and labour to extract and refine it. Within ten years, Johannesburg, which started as a rough miners' camp on the Rand, became the largest city in the Transvaal Republic. An industrial British island in a land of Boer farmers, it created conflict between the two peoples which would not be resolved even by war.¹

The numerous gold mines on the Rand were organized into a number of groups in order to have enough capital to extract the ore. Though there are now seven of these groups, in the 1900's there were only three main groups of mines each bringing original development capital for the gold mining industry. These included the Consolidated Goldfields formed by Cecil Rhodes and his associates, Hermann Eckstein and Company which was a division of Wernher and Beit, the great industrial complex, and the Robinson group headed by J. B. Robinson, a businessman

who made separate fortunes in both diamonds and gold. The last was eventually taken over by Consolidated. Most individual mines of this era were associated with one or another of these groups.2

For hard manual labour, the mine owners decided early to use black natives, Kaffirs, at first recruited from the Transvaal and the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. Aside from the so-called "Kaffir Boom" in 1895, the mines never really secured enough of this kind of labour. The industry was hampered by "intricate pass laws and the liquor scandal, lack of systematic recruiting, haphazard organization of the mines themselves, and the filthy conditions under which the boys had to live—or die."3 Before the outbreak of the Boer war, some 100,000 natives worked in the mines earning a set wage of 45s per month. At this early date the Chamber of Mines, the Transvaal gold mine owners' organization, was discussing the possibility of supplementing Kaffir with Asiatic labour, either from India or China. With the coming of the war, however, the mines were closed down.4

When their army took the Rand, the British decided to reopen the mines to pay some of the war expenses and to help restore the country. They needed only to operate them as most mines were unharmed by the war. Lord Milner, who gave up administrative control of Cape

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4 Ibid.
Colony to become British Governor of the Transvaal, though retaining the title of High Commissioner for South Africa, based his reconstruction policy on the mining industry. Believing the hope of the Imperial interest in South Africa lay in the British residents, the arrogant and aristocratic Milner regarded the Boers as stupid, lazy, and backward, hampering the area's prosperity. He felt they would, given the opportunity, betray the Empire.  

The British mine owners did not fully agree with Milner's plans though they liked his reliance on gold mining. They were not willing simply to resume operations as Milner had hoped, but expected and demanded a great boom to recoup their losses. They hoped to progress faster by reopening the closed mines and simultaneously developing new ones. They immediately expected large profits now that the restrictive regime of Paul Kruger, President of the Transvaal, had ended. Their first step was to set native wages below the prewar level. During the war, wages had sunk in the few mines open to 20s per month, but the owners increased them to 30s and hoped to maintain them at that figure. The natives, however, refused to work. Many of them had earned enough from the British army to get along, at least temporarily, without working. In addition, the neighboring state of Natal, a promising recruiting area, had shut her doors to the labour recruiters, claiming

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she needed the natives for her own industry. By the end of the war, the owners had persuaded only 30,000 blacks to return to work.6

Wartime British residents of the Transvaal also expected a much improved economic situation once the war was over, an expectation thwarted by the lack of native labour. As Milner, in early 1903, reported to Joseph Chamberlain, the very controversial politician and Colonial Secretary:

But reasonable or unreasonable, the expectation that things would return to their old condition at once was general, and the fact that they have not done so has produced a profound disappointment. And since there is only one reason for this slow rate of recuperation, namely, that native labourers are not returning to the mines as was expected, public attention has been focused upon the question of Native labour.7

Although Lord Milner, in late-1902, forced the Chamber of Mines to restore pre-war wages, it did not help much. As will be seen, there were other reasons for the lack of native labour. To some, forced labour was the solution and could be accomplished by raising the hut tax, thus forcing the Kaffirs into the mines.8 While Milner believed some of the natives were not doing as much as possible to help restore the country's economy, he reported, in early 1903, to Chamberlain, "I desire once for all formally to disclaim on behalf of this administration


any desire or intention to compel natives to enter into the service of white employers by any means whatever.\footnote{9}

Milner's Commissioner for Native Affairs, Sir Godfrey Lagden, doubted that South Africa could ever supply enough natives. He estimated there were five million natives of whom eight hundred thousand were able-bodied men.\footnote{10} If every man took his turn, there would be sufficient labour; there was, however, no likelihood of this. He suggested that "the dominion policy may be usefully directed towards raising their standard of life whereby wants are created which money earned by labour of some description alone can justify."\footnote{11} A high native labour death rate in the mines compounded the problem. In the period from October, 1902 to March, 1903, the death rate was 42.03 per thousand. The natives not only had a low resistance to disease but also could not withstand the hardships of the mines.\footnote{12} Figures are not available from earlier years for comparison.


\footnote{10}The figures include the four provinces of Natal, Transvaal, The Orange Free State, and Cape Colony.

\footnote{11}Cd. 1551, 1903, pp. 10 and 153.

\footnote{12}Return of the Statistics of Morality, Sickness, and Desertion amongst the Natives Employed in the Rand Mines during the Period from October, 1902 to March, 1903 Ordered by the House of Commons to Be Printed 12 August, 1903. (345), pp. 4-5. (This is a Commons paper bound with the Command Papers though not numbered as a Command Paper.)
While in Johannesburg on an inspection visit to assess the damage from the war and to acquaint himself better with the problems of one area of his responsibility as Colonial Secretary, Chamberlain always the ardent imperialist and already beginning to think in terms of close imperial economic cooperation, attempted to alleviate the situation. Though he urged the use of white unskilled labour, he "promised to use his influence with the Foreign Office, with a view to obtaining the opening of practically the whole of British Africa to recruiting for labour for the mines."\textsuperscript{13} This offer brought mixed reactions. The Chamber of Mines felt this would considerably relieve the scarcity of native labour, but before the formal proposal could be made the Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce of Blantyre in the British Central African Protectorate, the area north of the Zambesi and west of Lake Nyasa known now as Malawi, unanimously protested any recruiting there. The members believed there was not enough labour for the colony's coffee and tobacco plantations and railroads.\textsuperscript{14}

The Commissioner of the Protectorate, disagreeing with the Blantyre Chamber, wrote to Landsdowne, the Foreign Secretary, that because of a local famine and dry spell, the question arose whether to grant permission to men to go down to South Africa for work. It might be considered, reported the Commissioner, provided the Transvaal labour agent, as well as paying proper wages, made provisions for feeding the families of labourers in the Protectorate, and this he was willing to

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Guardian}, January 22, 1903.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Times}, January 7, 1903.
do. Lansdowne agreed to allow up to 1,000 men to go. He reminded the Commissioner that he should insist upon strict precautions and that the men were only to go to the Witwatersrand district of the Transvaal.15

There were protests. A London deputation to Lansdowne, largely composed of clergymen and missionaries, warned it would endanger the morals of the men. Lansdowne pointed out the careful conditions--one tribe to a barracks, no curfew, no intoxicating liquor, good foods and housing without cost to the native--which would protect the natives. He reminded the protesters that only 1,000 could go at an agreed wage of £1 10s per month.16

Although opening this territory to recruiting brightened the situation, many felt it would still not provide enough labour. The question of supplementing the supply by using unskilled white labour raised a fundamental question for the Transvaal. Was it to be a white country or was it to be a black one with white overseers? There were many who hoped it would develop into another Australia; a place where unemployed British workmen might start a new life. If South Africa were to develop, said the Times, "she must draw to her shores a large white population before the economic framework of her institutions hardens upon the wrong lines."17


16 Ibid., p. 3; Guardian, March 24, 1903.

17 January 6, 1903.
Frederick H. P. Creswell, an engineer and manager of the Village Main Reef Gold Mine, on the Rand, was one of the leading advocates of white labour. With the owners' blessing, he employed a number of whites in unskilled positions. At no time did they work in any integrated labour gangs. Even this separation of black and white was not enough; as Creswell admitted, there were some jobs suitable only for blacks. Within a year the owners had ended the experiment, partly, it appears, out of fear of the economic and social power of organized white labour. 18

The results of this experiment and its significance were debated throughout the period of the labour shortage. The opponents, led by the Chamber of Mines, argued that white labour was economically impossible. The profit margin was so small that to employ the number of whites needed at a livable wage in the high-priced Johannesburg economy would bankrupt the employers. The small mines would have to close, and the large ones would find their margin considerably cut. Additionally, the question of proper respect for whites in a colonial situation arose. To work alongside blacks degraded them; it would cause loss of face for the whole white population. Besides, whites quit when they realized they were doing Kaffir work. 19

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18 A letter from Percy Tarbut, Chairman of the Company's Board of Directors, to Creswell is extremely enlightening. He feared "that the combination of the labouring classes will become so strong as to be able to more or less dictate not only questions of wages but also on political questions by the power of their votes when a representative government is established." Cd. 1897, 1904, pp. 574-597.

19 Guardian, February 11, 1903; Fox, MacDonell, and Seebohm, loc. cit., p. 541.
Creswell and his friends argued that the experiment was never fairly tried. In other mines, whites were used in a manner that could not produce a profit. Creswell found the number of whites used in the mines inversely proportional to the number of blacks. Thus an increase in black labour even with Chinese supplements would never produce an increase in white labour. Others argued that if the coal mines in southern England did not make a profit, no one suggested that whites be replaced by either Chinese or Kaffir labour.20

Since each side used the same statistics to support its argument, there was no possible resolution to the debate. There could be no doubt, however, that the white experiments had been conducted only on a limited scale and that the mine owners were averse to using unskilled white labour. Within a year after the end of the Boer war, the mining industry had reached this impasse. The number of blacks available was insufficient to meet the grandiose plans of the owners. The owners found white labour too expensive. They had to turn to some other labour source. They began their campaign to secure the right to import Chinese indentured labour.

This campaign began as soon as the mines reopened after the war. While it is difficult to find a specific starting date, an article in the Nineteenth Century and After for February, 1902, stated the case for Chinese labour; it was quiet, industrious, and profitable. The

Kaffirs would benefit from a good example and be shown that they did not hold a labour monopoly.\textsuperscript{21}

Chamberlain's South African inspection trip brought him face to face with the problem. He said the owners had three choices. They could expand their present recruiting area, rely on additional white labour, or use some form of Asiatic labour, either Indian or Chinese, obtainable through British controlled treaty ports.\textsuperscript{22} To some in Johannesburg, the last appeared the only remedy. The Transvaal \textit{Leader}, doubting the seriousness of the labour problem, said that Chinese labour would be acceptable only as a last resort and then only under "stringent Government controls."\textsuperscript{23}

Chamberlain's statement aroused enough storm in the colony to make him clarify it further. He said he had made a strong recommendation for white labour, but "categorically denied that he had made any compact with the mining industry to countenance the introduction of Chinese labour."\textsuperscript{24} According to the Transvaal \textit{Leader}, he had in a sentence destroyed what might be called "the Chinese legend." To further quiet the furor, Milner promised an investigation by a Royal Commission; not to investigate Chinese labour, but, rather, to investigate the problem and supply of native labour.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22}Times, January 16 and 17, 1903.
\textsuperscript{23}Guardian, January 19, 1903.
\textsuperscript{24}Times, January 19, 1903.
\textsuperscript{25}Guardian, January 19 and 21, 1903.
Returning to England, Chamberlain more clearly defined his position. In the House of Commons on March 19, 1903, he admitted the explosiveness of proposals to introduce Asiatic labour and again denied making any such proposal, saying, "Everyone concerned in the matter . . . is agreed that every possible source of supply must be exhausted before the introduction of Asiatic or Chinese labour is ever thought of." A few days later, when Sir William Harcourt, a Liberal party leader and formidable debater, attacked the mining monopoly, claiming that it dominated the Transvaal, Chamberlain replied that the industry was the colony's largest and that the rest of the country remained financially dependent upon it. People were at present opposed to Chinese labour; thus he had not allowed it, but this did not mean they would not change their mind. If they did, he thought the Imperial Government "neither could nor would interfere to prevent them from giving effect to their wishes." Throughout the rest of his term of office and in the 1905 campaign, Chamberlain maintained that Chinese labour was none of the Imperial Government's business. It was an internal economic matter which he believed to be the Transvaal's own concern.

At the same time, the Chamber of Mines began an investigation into the use of Chinese labour sending Mr. Ross Skinner, a former gold-mining engineer with government civil and military service, as a Commissioner to England, California, and the Far East to check into the feasibility and supply of Asiatic labour. It also worked to improve

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26 Great Britain, 4 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CXIX (1903), 1283, hereafter referred to as Debates.

27 Ibid. (Commons), CXXX, 90-104 (March 24, 1903).
its own recruiting system, having established the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association in 1900 to centralize recruiting. Its purpose was to cut down on competition and other evils of the independent recruiter. The same personnel who ran the Chamber of Mines ran the Association, though technically its functions were separate. It was a non-profit organization with each mine contributing toward expenses.28 The mine owners in the spring of 1903 created the Labour Importation Association as an adjunct of the Native Labour Association and promised "to work for the importation of unskilled coloured labour under conditions safeguarding the good treatment of the immigrants and their repatriation after a maximum period of five years, and strict confining of their employment to unskilled labour."29

Chinese labour proponents in South Africa immediately began a campaign to convince the Colonial Secretary that the country's mood had changed. The first break came at a South African Inter-Colonial Conference held in March, 1903, in Bloemfontein. The purpose of the conference was to examine common economic problems particularly in respect to rail shipping rates. In its discussion of the current labour shortage, the conference indicated in its report that there was not enough native labour available for the needs of the mines and that "if industrial development positively requires it, the introduction of unskilled labourers under a system of Government control, by which

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29 Times, July 8, 1903.
provisions shall be made for indenture and repatriation . . . shall be permissible." The Times correspondent termed this a "very significant decision," pointing out that while South African whites opposed a permanent settlement of Asiatics, they were willing to allow temporary labour under strict control if the mines needed it.

The mine owners, in public statements and meetings, began to press their case. Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, the incumbent President of the Chamber of Mines and a man with an intense political interest who had been found guilty of high treason by the Boer government in connection with the Jameson Raid and who had later served the Tory party of first the Transvaal and then the Union of South Africa, assured the people that the mines would not dictate a decision. He insisted the supply of native labour was insufficient and that the natives should be forced to work, but that "... the question of the introduction of Chinese labour would not be decided by the mining industry alone. It concerned the whole country deeply, and all resources should be exhausted before it was introduced." Mr. George Albu, one of the original mining magnates, President of the Charlton Gold Mining Company, an independent company, thought higher native wages would help but would not be enough. He suggested an experimental importation of 10,000 Chinese. He believed that the fear of Asiatics overrunning the


31 Times, March 21, 1903.

32 Times, February 28, 1903.
country was exaggerated, although he demanded the severest restrictive regulations.33

Sir George Farrar, another owner, and a leading advocate of Chinese labour, who also had great political ambitions having been a ringleader of the Jameson plot in Johannesburg for which the Boers sentenced him at first to death then mitigated the sentence to a £25,000 fine, addressed his men at the Driefontein Mine on March 31, 1903. Explaining the conditions of the proposed indenture, he assured his men the Chinese would not compete for their jobs. They would be prohibited from trade, from skilled jobs, and from holding any land.34 Farrar took his case to a mass meeting in Johannesburg where he admitted that he defended an inherently unpopular position. He did so because he believed the Chinese were necessary in order to create white jobs. He admitted problems had to be cleared up but defended the Bloemfontein resolution, saying the representatives "were only asked to prepare to open the door to Asiatic indentured labour provided the African supply was insufficient." Despite his urgent plea, the meeting, after hearing opponents to the proposal, carried, by a show of hands, "with many reserving their judgement," a resolution against the importation of Asians.35 Later in the year, Mr. Raymond Schumacker, president of

33 Guardian, March 2, 1903.
35 Times, April 2, 1903; Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. LXI, Cd. 1895, February, 1904, "Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony," p. 15.
the Glen Deep Mining Company, said, in a shareholders meeting, that the gold industry was the one great industry of the Transvaal and that the general financial situation of the Rand depended upon it: "Unless the mines were free to import labour soon from every available field, not only the mines but nearly every individual in South Africa would suffer a loss that might prove ruinous." Lionel Philips, who frequently represented Eckstein in political matters and who had also been sentenced to death by the Boers, said the Chinese were needed because "... in the state of deorganization then prevailing, the only means of re-establishing the gold industry on a permanent basis was to give it the assurance of a stable supply of labour."36

Since he already believed the mining industry to be the key to the South African economy, it was not difficult to convince Lord Milner of the necessity of Chinese labour. To Dr. James E. Moffat, an English non-conformist minister, on January 1, 1903 the High Commissioner wrote:

... I believe that when everything is done, we shall still be short, and very short of unskilled labour for the enormous industrial development ... which is within reach of the Transvaal and of all South Africa, if only workmen can be found. The ultimate solution, I quite agree with you, is in the increase of the white population. ... But, in order to get that white population at all, we must make things move in the immediate future, and certain as I am that African labour ... will not be sufficient to supply our wants in the early future, I think we must call in the aid of the Asiatics. I look upon this as a temporary expedient, but for the time being essential.37


Milner felt that the majority of the population would soon adopt the policy which "the majority of thinking men" already held. Asiatic labour, he said, should not be rejected if all other means had been tried. Instead the government should "devote all its ingenuity to seeing how we can regulate their labour in such a manner that they will not flood us in other industries and trades than mining."38 He was able to reconcile this belief with his desire of adding to the British whites in the Transvaal, because he did not consider the mines a normal part of industry. They were instead to give a sudden stimulus to the business community, though this would mean they would be a shortlived proposition. As a "treasurehouse to be efficiently plundered," the type of labour there did not matter because of its comparative short duration.39

Milner increased pressure on the home Government when he telegraphed the Colonial Secretary in May, 1903 that the question of labour was "beginning to assume a really alarming aspect. There are simply not enough natives in South Africa, if they all worked, for our growing requirements. . . ." He hoped that Indian coolies might be used assuming the Secretary of State for India would allow a repatriation clause as they were unacceptable otherwise. He promised good treatment and high wages. Later, he asked for 10,000 coolies just for new

38Ibid., p. 461.

railroad construction throughout South Africa. Chamberlain replied that the Imperial Government wanted definite assurance of a favorable public opinion. He asked Milner how to ascertain the "real verdict of public opinion of the colonies." He warned that it was necessary for South Africa to modify her harsh anti-Asiatic laws before there was any real hope of successful negotiations.

In the middle of June, 1903, a deputation from the mining industry waited on Milner to ask for the "immediate appointment of a Commission to inquire whether the Transvaal could obtain sufficient labour for agricultural and industrial development." Milner again promised such a Commission. On July 2, 1903, the long-awaited and often promised Commission was appointed. No reference was made to Chinese labour in the frame of reference presented it.

On August 7, 1903, Milner left South Africa for a European vacation, including stays at some of the great spas. While taking the cure, he received a letter from the Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, dated September 13, 1903, informing him that Chamberlain had resigned and offering him the Colonial Secretaryship. Apparently he was not interested from the beginning and following a series of consultations with Balfour and other party leaders, Milner, in a letter of

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40 Telegrams May 12 and 23, 1903, Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XLV, Cd, 1683, 1903, "Correspondence Relating to a Proposal to Employ Indian Coolies under Indenture on Railways in the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies," p. 3.

41 Telegrams May 23, 1903, in Cd. 1683, 1903, pp. 4-5.

42 Guardian, June 15 and July 4, 1903.
September 30, 1903, to Balfour, declined the position saying, "I do not think I ought to abandon the work to which I have devoted so many years, at its present necessarily very incomplete stage. . . ." Milner recommended Alfred E. Lyttelton who was given the post. 

This presented the interesting relationship of a supervisor who had been handpicked by a key subordinate. When pressure was growing for Chinese labour, in Lyttelton Milner had found a Colonial Secretary who was willing to accept it.

While in England, Milner attempted to gain bipartisan support for his project. He discussed the matter with three leading Liberal Imperialists, Asquith, Grey, and Haldane. When he returned to South Africa, he believed he had convinced his former allies of the Boer war years of the need for Chinese labour. One writer even states that he went on because of their promised support. Much to his surprise the support dissolved when he needed it. Milner thought that part of the opposition stemmed from a misunderstanding. A failure to distinguish between Asiatic immigration and the importation of Asiatics as indentured labourers bothered many in the Transvaal and even more people in

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45 Walker, op. cit., p. 511.
England. Milner promised the mine owner, George Farrar, that he would do his utmost to clear up this misunderstanding. 47

Geoffry Robinson (later as Geoffry Dawson, editor of the Times), Milner's secretary and a member of the group of bright young men known as Milner's "Kindergarten," wrote to his father that little was happening in the Transvaal in the Spring of 1903 except "a bit of an outburst on the Asiatic question. . . . I think there is little doubt now that it will come to Chinamen in time." He went on to say that it would release many blacks for other work and that the yellow men could be kept under control. He thought it would bring a "great increase" in the number of whites as low-grade mines could be opened. 48

The Times must ultimately be counted among the supporters of the proposed importation, but initially it appeared to oppose the introduction of Asiatics, on January 16, 1903 when it commented:

There need to be no hesitation about saying that the introduction of Chinamen into the Transvaal would be regarded by the bulk of the people of this country with repugnance and distrust. In the whole Empire, nay, in the whole English-speaking world, we do not know where to look for any body of opinion worth considering that would frankly approve the introduction of Chinese labour into South Africa.

The paper equivocated by agreeing to the Chinese if they were absolutely necessary, which had not yet been proved. The main objection, at this point, was that it would further complicate an already complicated


racial situation. Reflecting the favorable attitude of its correspond­
ent in the Transvaal during the Spring and Summer, the paper gradually
changed its position until by October 29, 1903, it could say that
Chinese alone could stop the recession in the colony. From this time
onward, the paper supported the introduction of the Chinese as a
regrettable necessity. 49

In the months to come, until Chinese labour was a reality,
these would remain the basic arguments in its favor. Despite embellish­
ment and minor changes the arguments still centered around the fact that
the mines were the center of the Transvaal economy and needed an
abundant, cheap and dependable source of unskilled labour. Failure to
provide this labour would result in economic hardship not only for
those directly concerned with the mines, but for the Transvaal as a
whole.

49 Times, January 16, April 16, and October 29, 1903.
CHAPTER XI

THE OPPONENTS OF CHINESE LABOUR

The opposition to Chinese labour crystallized into four main groups: the Boer residents of the Transvaal, the white miners' trade organizations backed by the Labour Party in Britain, the Liberal Party, and those other Imperial Governments which had had some experience with Chinese labour. While in some respects these groups found some of the same reasons for opposition, each represented a particular current of opposition.

The more outspoken Boer leaders solidly opposed the projected experiments. The Afrikander Bond Congress, meeting in June, 1903, declared "the importation of Asiatics inimical to the social interest of South Africa." Louis Botha, the former Boer General and leading spokesman for his people who would later lead the Union of South Africa, saw no need of unskilled foreign labour. He believed the native labour supply sufficient and in a letter which appeared in the London Times protested vehemently:

... the vastly preponderant black population of South Africa must now be reinforced by hordes of the yellow races from Asia in order that the mining ventures of the Transvaal may pay dividends. These financial gentlemen are not deterred by the prospect that such a step will degrade South Africa forever and prevent it from being

Guardian, June 2, 1903.
a country for white immigrants, and finally make it once more a black man's land. . . . We are convinced of their utter and naked selfishness; and, what is more, we are convinced of their stupidity and want of foresight in all matters of politics.²

Botha and other Boers rejected the claim that the Transvaal should furnish gold by the fastest possible mining in order to secure the largest dividends for the stockholders, most of whom were not from South Africa. They insisted that this plan of operation completely neglected the interests of the community as a whole.

Botha also wrote to Volkstem, a Boer newspaper, warning his fellow citizens against the unlawful use of his name to drum up support for the importation of Chinese. Cautioning patience, he told the people not to allow the mine owners to shift, from themselves, responsibility for any disaster which Chinese labour might bring.³ Later, in a newspaper interview, he declared himself against all proposed petitions as there was not a representative government in South Africa to accept them. Importation of the Chinese, he insisted, would "cause the greatest mischief in our country, and we can in no manner make ourselves accessories." He did advocate more extensive recruiting in Africa, and then, if that did not produce the desired results, perhaps some temporary labour from South India.⁴ He never explained what made Indians acceptable when Chinese were not.

²Times, July 13 and 15, 1903.
³Times, August 3, 1903.
⁴Times, August 24 and June 4, 1903; enclosed in a Telegram from Milner to Lyttelton, January 11, 1904, in Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. LXI, Cd. 1899, 1904, "Further Correspondence Regarding the Transvaal Labour Question," p. 4.
Former Boer General Jans Christian Smuts, who would later serve his country in a variety of positions including Prime Minister, saw published his private letter to Emily Hobhouse, an Englishwoman who had previously helped the Boers by exposing the horrors of the wartime refugee camps. The letter read:

That a large portion of the Boers are apathetic is no doubt true, but they are people who have lost all hope and heart. . . . Naturally to such people (and I sometimes think they are right) the importation of Chinese is but an incident. An item in the main account which is being rapidly run up to a gigantic amount. . . . But surely such apathy ought to give Lord Milner even greater pangs than the fiercest opposition. For beneath the apathy there burns in the Boer mind a fierce indignation against this sacrilege of Chinese importation. . . . Often when I think of what is happening now all over in South Africa my mind stands still—for the folly, the criminality of it all is simply inconceivable. . . .

He went on to predict that the British residents would one day appeal to the Boers to "save them from the consequences of their insane policy of today." When a horrified Smuts heard of the disclosure, he quickly wrote to Miss Hobhouse not to publish any other of the letters which he had written to her. He feared he would be branded an "irreconciliable" and possibly deported.5

The small towns and rural areas which usually had a Boer majority held town meetings to consider the problem. In one of these meetings the Stockport Valley farmers voiced their opposition to the introduction of Asiatics, but took no action pending the collection of evidence and a conference of agricultural representatives of the western

5W. K. Hancock, Smuts, pp. 183-184.
Transvaal. In another instance, the burghers of Heidelberg argued that the introduction of Asiatics would not be in the permanent interest of South Africa and should not, therefore, be undertaken until the whites, operating under self-governing institutions, could decide upon the importation of Asiatics. In any case, no decision should be taken until there was conclusive proof that the labour capacity of South Africa was insufficient. In August, 1903, a large meeting of the Farmers Association at Krugersdorp, a west Rand city, discussed Chinese labour. The meeting, attended by both Smuts and Botha, unanimously adopted a resolution suspending judgment upon the proposed importation until publication of the Labour Commission report.

Such protests on the part of the Boers represented about the limit of their opposition. Their leaders were still in disgrace; they had lost a war; and too much opposition could lead to censure or even deportation. The only Boer representatives on the Legislative Council, the appointive legislature, were those who were known for their willingness to cooperate with the British rulers. Additionally, most of the Boers were not deeply concerned with mining matters as they did not have any personal connections with the mines. They remained predominantly an agricultural people whose primary interest lay in recreating their lives on the farms after wartime dislocation. Their

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6 Times, July 13, 1903.

7 Despatch from Milner to Chamberlain transmitted at the request of General Botha, July 17, 1903 in Cd. 1895 (1904), p. 53.

8 Times, August 3, 1903.
most serious protests against Chinese labour would come later when these outlying farms were attacked by bands of deserters from the labour camps.

Some white businessmen, favoring the Boer opposition, formed the African Labour League. They believed South Africa to be the future home of a great white nation. If imported labour was necessary, it should be from areas that could assimilate with resident Europeans. The league also felt the depression was greatly exaggerated and that if the natives were used in already producing mines the gold output would more than equal the old. The League complained of insufficient commercial representation on the Royal Commission investigating labour conditions and said that any decision should be postponed until the establishment of representative institutions. Until this was done, there was no effective way to gauge public opinion.

Not unexpectedly, various white labour groups were opposed to Chinese labour. Imported workers would threaten all free labour in the mines. If the Chinese could be economically used in some positions, why could they not be used for all positions in the mines? Edward Rose, one-time President of the Witwatersrand Mine Employees and Mechanics Union, warned that the Chinese would quickly desert and would be almost impossible to apprehend on the open veldt. Secondly, companies paying regular wages would object, since their competitors would be paying cheap wages to the Chinese. He also felt the white miners' objections

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9 _Times_, July 2, 1903.
10 Telegram from the African Labour League to Chamberlain, July 30, 1903, in Cd. 1895 (1904), p. 46.
to the Chinese would certainly lead to strikes or even to serious violence.\textsuperscript{11} In October of 1903, the Transvaal Miners Association, another workers' organization of three miners from each mine resolved: "We as a congress pledge ourselves with the other affiliated bodies in opposing the introduction of Asiatics in this Colony until a referendum is taken and the population agrees."\textsuperscript{12}

Despite this stand of organized labour, the individual workers in the mines were not so certain. From time to time groups of mine employees voted to import Chinese as they saw no other way to keep the mine owners' word that the Chinese would be used exclusively in unskilled positions which removed any threat to their jobs.\textsuperscript{13} It is impossible to tell how much pressure these men were subjected to in order to make them endorse this line of thought which could then be used to sway the government.

The Labour Representation Committee in Britain supported the position of organized labour in the Transvaal. The Labour Leader, the weekly of the socialist affiliate of the party, the I.L.P.\textsuperscript{14} editorialized that importation of Chinese by the "hundred thousand" would open the flood gates and "submerge the Aryan races." In addition, any form of compulsory labour, even if the worker originally signed some form, was slavery no matter how it might be disguised.\textsuperscript{15} James Ramsay

\textsuperscript{11}Guardian, June 15, 1903.
\textsuperscript{12}Times, October 6, 1903.
\textsuperscript{13}Times, August 12 and 14, 1903; Guardian, September 7, 1903.
\textsuperscript{14}I.L.P. stood for the Independent Labour Party which was formed in 1893 and which in 1900 allied with the trade unions to form the Labor Representation Committee, later (after 1906) it was officially known as the British Labour Party.
\textsuperscript{15}Labour Leader, January 24 and September 26, 1903.
MacDonald, the future labour parliamentary leader, while on an inspection trip to South Africa in the fall of 1902, had admitted the mines faced a drastic labour shortage. Believing the mine owners had the ear of the South African Government, he thought they would receive some help. Although he did not see a solution, MacDonald did not foresee the possibility of Chinese labour. In a book which he wrote following his trip, he did not indicate that he was even particularly concerned with the problem. 16

The socialist wing of MacDonald's party saw the problem as one of simply capitalistic domination.

In connection with labour in South Africa, [said the Labour Leader,] that is only happening which clear sighted men saw was inevitable from the beginning. The war was a capitalist's war and these men are now demanding their pound of flesh. And they will get it. There is no hope for the natives in that cold, cynical Birmingham-bred capitalist who believes in the dignity of labour, for natives, and is willing and eager to induce those unfortunate fellow colonists of ours to be indoctrinated into it. . . . 17

Though the Labour Representation Committee remained opposed in principle to any form of compulsory labour, it did not make the fight against Chinese labour one of its major issues. The party was preoccupied with other matters closer to home. The most serious was the necessity for repeal of the Taff-Vale decision of 1901, if the party was to continue in existence. Thus, although the party members could be counted amongst the opposition to the Chinese, they never formed the same forceful opposition as the Liberals. As might be expected many


17 Labour Leader, April 4, 1903.
unions sent individual protests to the government. The Socialist Democratic Federation which remained outside the Labour Party though some individuals belonged to both, was more vehement in its denunciation of the proposed introduction of the Chinese. A typical resolution was one by the Essex Council of the SDF which said:

[The Council] enters its emphatic protest against the importation of cheap Chinese labour into South Africa for the benefit of millionaire mine owners; calls the attention of the people of these islands to the fact that all the blood that has been shed and the treasure that has been wasted in the subjugation of the two Dutch Republics have brought about a state of devastation and ruin in South Africa in place of the good times and prosperity promised by those who hounded the country into the late war; and demands that the Government at once take steps to stop this yellow invasion by virtual slave labour which must inevitably tend to degradation and corruption of the worst possible kind, besides increasing the bitter discontent which must necessarily impede the peaceful solution of the many serious problems that British rule in South Africa has now to face.19

For the Liberals the question of Chinese labour provided a splendid opportunity to attack the ruling Conservatives. First, it gave the Liberals a chance to unite over the very part of the world which had so seriously divided them in the days of the Boer war. Secondly, in opposing the Chinese, they would side with the Boers as so many of the party so earnestly desired. Furthermore, considering that the Boers were at this time a group without a serious political voice, the Liberals felt obligated to speak for their South African friends. If the Boers were not represented by the right to vote in South Africa, any action

18 Yorkshire Factory Times, March 4, 1904.
19 Justice, January 30, 1904.
which might be taken by the Transvaal government could be forthrightly rejected. It did not have the whole backing of the people of the Transvaal since the Boers, at least in the rural areas, made up the majority of the people.  

Closely connected to this argument, the Liberals rejected Chamberlain's contention that the Transvaal could decide the matter of Chinese labour by itself. Sir William Harcourt, former Liberal leader of Commons leading the opposition to the Chinese at the moment, said that if the gold mines depended upon Asiatic labour:

Then what we have to determine is whether these new colonies, which we have purchased at such a vast expenditure of life and treasure, are to be a white man's country or a yellow man's country. That is really the decision that has to be taken by the British Government and the British Parliament. We are responsible for they are not self-governing Colonies, but Crown Colonies. . . .  

The Manchester Guardian echoed this attitude when it asked on what foundation was the new colony to be established. "Are we to establish a small commercial oligarchy on the basis of black or yellow semi-slave labour, or is our ideal rather a white democracy such as exists in Australia and Canada?"  

Another point upon which the Liberals attacked the government was the question of free labour versus any sort of compulsory labour. A meeting of Manchester Liberals unanimously adopted a resolution which

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20 "Chinese Labour" in Liberal Magazine, II (January, 1904), 758-759

21 Debates, CXXVI, 346 (July 27, 1903).

22 Guardian, April 1, 1903.
said, "that the existence of slavery of forced labour of any kind is abhorrent to the feelings of the people of this country and a disgrace to a civilized nation." One speaker pointed out that the diamond mines were not experiencing a similar difficulty securing labour; and that if all the gold mines raised wages, they too could have all the labour they needed.\textsuperscript{23} The \textit{Guardian} continued the attack charging that while there was a lack of native labour, the government "had to institute relief work for many hundreds of white men who can get no employment."

This resulted when administrative control passed to a single private interest. "Our whole colonial system may be upset—but dividends must be maintained."\textsuperscript{24} Others argued that if the coal mines in southern England did not make a profit, there was no suggestion that whites should be dumped for Chinese or Kaffir labour. Why should this attitude be allowed to predominate in South Africa?\textsuperscript{25}

The Liberals also charged that the proposals to bring Chinese labour into the mines represented strictly class legislation. While Sir William Harcourt attacked the mining monopoly in the Commons, claiming that it dominated the Transvaal and dictated to the rest of the country, the \textit{Guardian} said the government had to decide between the narrow commercial interest of the mines or the broader national interests of "building up the colonies a peaceful and contented industrial organization." The policy of the mining houses was apparent to everyone; they

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, March 17, 1903.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, April 30, 1903.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, February 13, 1903.
wanted cheap labour which could not combine either politically or economically against them, and they were willing to accept Chinese labour, if necessary, in order to achieve this purpose. "It is necessary to take the bull by the horns and to declare once and for all our main interest in the country is not to ensure dividends to the mine owners," said the Guardian leading article. . . . "Our interest in South Africa is to make a contented colony and to enforce certain principles of Government."  

The attack on the Conservative party government also took the form of an attack on its representative in South Africa. The Guardian charged:

Lord Milner has lost much of his wartime popularity and is freely attacked for undue compliance to the gold ring; that he is trying to govern by the help of queerly Russian-looking arrangements for deporting persons who displease him and even imprisoning them without trial; and that the whole combination of bad trade, dissatisfied labour, political and social discontent, and official repression is presenting a mortifying contrast with the decidedly less acute state of things to change which Lord Milner secured a war.  

The Guardian also claimed that the mining interests wanted to deny the white British miner his free and independent position in the Transvaal which he had fought for in the South African war. It charged:

... the capitalists are aiming not only at high profits but at political power by the exclusion, so far as possible, of white labour. They are, in fact, seeking to deprive this country of a possession won by its own exertion, and to convert what may be a fair British province into a labour

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26 Debates, CXX, 90-101 (March, 1903); Guardian, April 1, 1903.

27 Guardian, July 31, 1903.
farm run for their own selfish advantage. To check such a conspiracy is surely a work in which all Englishmen should unite, irrespective of party.28

Lastly, the Liberals used the emotional aspect of Chinese labour which combined all the previous arguments in the cry "Chinese Slavery." This was foreshadowed early in 1903 when Sir William Harcourt discussed the proposed Chinese labour in the *Times*:

I shall not waste time discussing such an alternative. I am well assured that no British Government will ever be a party to such a degradation of the British name, and it has been made clear that it is indignantly rejected by every organ of public opinion in this country and by the unanimous voice of our self-governing colonies also, who have had bitter experience of this demoralizing mischief.29

This attitude toward the Chinese did not need an explanation as was true of Liberal opposition to other Tory programs; i.e., the Education Act and the Tariff proposals which came before the General Election of 1905. The Liberal Party now had its slogan for electioneering—"Chinese labour."

Many of Britain's colonies with some sort of political voice also objected. Close to the Transvaal, Mr. Thomas L. Graham, Cape Colony Attorney-General, later a jurist, in reopening the Parliamentary Debating Society in Capetown, "urged all to oppose to the utmost the introduction of Asiatic labour which would bring misery to the homes of the working men and to the country."30 The country's official position was made public when the House of Assembly passed a resolution, "That

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28 Ibid., November 3, 1903.
29 *Times*, February 5, 1903.
30 Ibid., May 22, 1903.
this House taking cognizance of the Resolution passed at the recent
Conference held at Bloemfontein on the subject of qualified approval of
the importation of Asiatic labour, desires to express its strong oppo-
sition to any such importation as prejudicial to the interests of all
classes of people of South Africa." The Cape Colony Senate also passed
the resolution a few days later. In the Senate debate some speakers
indicated that the resolution was useless as the mine owners were
already determined to bring in the Chinese and that nothing would deter
them, least of all the colonial government under Lord Milner.

Later on Leander S. Jameson, Cecil Rhodes' former lieutenant
and leader of the Jameson Raid upon the Boer Transvaal, now back in the
political spotlight and soon to become Prime Minister of Cape Colony,
spoke out against the Chinese in his election campaign. He said that
the Australian attempt to use Chinese labour should serve as a warning
for the Transvaal. He pointed out that, though the Chinese were not
yet prohibited by law in Cape Colony, he had written to the Governor
asking him to exclude them until the new Parliament could enact the
proper legislation.

Protests from Britain's white Far Eastern colonies were also
heard. Richard Seddon, Prime Minister of New Zealand, whose country
tried and rejected Chinese labour, realized that his was a delicate
position. There was a question of the propriety of a prime minister

31 Telegrams from Governor Sir W. F. Hely-Hutchinson to Chamber-
lain, July 2 and 21, 1903, in Cd. 1895 (1904), pp. 44-45.
32 Guardian, July 4, 1903.
33 Ibid., January 1 and 7, 1904.
publicly discussing the internal affairs of another colony. He person­ally felt that imported Chinese labour would make white South Africans think that the war had been in vain. He would, despite the impropriety, take steps to ascertain the feelings of his Parliament concerning the matter. Later, in a speech to his constituents, he said, "if as a result of the Transvaal's being brought under the British flag, hordes of Chinese were introduced to work in the Rand mines, it would be a stained blot and a grave reflection on the Administration and would be bitterly resented by the self-governing colonies which had made great sacrifices in favour of the mother country." He then invited the Prime Ministers of the other self-governing Colonies to join in an anti-Chinese protest.

He received a mixed response to this invitation. Natal flatly rejected the proposal by a vote of thirty to two in the Legislative Council. Canada also refused to join in the protest though she objected to the Chinese. She would not protest because Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Prime Minister, and his colleagues "flatly refused to join in his attempt to dictate the domestic policy of the conquered state which it was the proclaimed intention of the Imperial Government to treat as a self-governing colony in questions of internal development." 

34 Guardian, July 25, 1903.
35 Times, January 11 and 12, 1904.
The two colonies which had the greatest experience handling Chinese labour, Australia and New Zealand, ultimately sent telegrams of protest. New Zealand's, more strongly worded than that of Australia, said:

My Government desires to protest against proposal to introduce Chinese labour in South Africa. After years experience in New Zealand my ministers agree prohibition of Chinese immigration imperative in the best interests of British communities, especially those with or likely to have, responsible government. . . . Earnestly my Government recommend that you will consider this question as the objections, in their opinion, heavily outweigh immediate pecuniary advantages and they think immediate advantages would be dearly purchased by influx of foreign element, dangerous while unassimilated, and not to be assimilated without prejudice to our progress, institutions, and patriotic ideals.37

Although the Labour Party in Australia dominated the Parliament, the temptation to insist upon white labour for the mines was considerably modified in Prime Minister Alfred Deakin's telegram. While the first paragraph remained the same, it contained a qualifying paragraph which said:

Though reluctant to travel beyond our boundaries in order to obtrude into matters of local import the Ministers are compelled to express their deep apprehension of the results of the introduction of Chinese into the Transvaal, and foresee great perils of a racial, social, political, and even sanitary nature.38

The many objections of these varied people and groups show that the introduction of Chinese labour would be an issue which could deeply divide not only the Transvaal, but also the Imperial Government and even

37 Telegram from Earl of Ranfurly (Gov. N.Z.) to Lyttelton, January 20, 1904 in Cd. 1895 (1904), p. 231.

38 Guardian, January 20, 1904.
the self-governing Colonies. Clearly, some of the objections were valid while others represented simply another chance to attack the government. Regardless of intent, these objections form the basis of opposition to a policy which was sprung upon the people of the Empire in order to cure the ills of the Transvaal gold-mining industry and through it the South African economy.
The publication of two reports on the Chinese labour proposal helped pave the way for a formal resolution from the Transvaal Legislative Council requesting enabling legislation. The first report was that prepared by Ross Skinner to determine the feasibility of Chinese labour. The second was by the Royal Commission investigating the labour shortage and its causes.

Ross Skinner, a mining engineer, had been sent by the Chamber of Mines to the Far East, via the United States and Canada. He pointed out in his report that the people of the United States objected because the Chinese worked faster and cheaper than whites, thereby throwing the latter out of work. He concluded that "as a free immigrant, allowed to mix, work alongside, and trade with the general community, the Chinaman [had] shown himself to be an undesirable member of a society constituted on European principles." In order to protect the whites, he felt certain restrictions should be explained before the Chinese could come to the Transvaal; terms of service, class of work, hours, prohibition of trade, prohibition of land ownership, and compulsory return.

Skinner felt the better class of coolies from both North and South China were suitable for work in the mines. The Chinese, however, would probably not extract as much ore at first as the Kaffirs.
A relatively longer term of service than that for which blacks enlisted would give more experienced hands, resulting in increased production. Only the very best specimens should be selected as the work was hard and it cost as much to import a bad labourer as a good hand. Allowing for these considerations, he thought, "sufficient Chinese labour [could] be obtained to fulfill the present and immediate future requirements of the Rand."

Mr. Skinner considered the necessary requirements to obtain good hands. These were free passage both ways, including meals, an advance before leaving China for clothes and temporary family support which would be deducted later; a minimum daily wage, sufficiently nourishing food, free housing and medical care, and company-private stores for the sale of common Chinese goods. He concluded that a three-year contract would best satisfy both owners and the Chinese.

The investigator issued a few warnings about the Chinese. He opposed integration of Chinese and Kaffirs in the same work teams. It would be best if they could be segregated by districts. To handle the Chinese, he suggested hiring a thoroughly trained expert until local men could be trained to handle the influx. He warned specifically against allowing the Chinese to smoke opium, substituting large quantities of cheap Chinese tobacco instead. Opium lessened efficiency and would prove costly. Women should be allowed to accompany the men as a reward for good work. This would provide an incentive and would keep the men from becoming restless.
In summation he said:

If the Chinese are introduced to these fields as unskilled mine labourers, under the proposed indenture, and kept strictly to their respective compounds and mine areas except with special pass they will be found to be no more objectionable neighbors to the towns and villages than the Kaffirs after the European population have had some little time to get accustomed to them.

The best way to ensure success was "to proceed slowly and surely making no mistakes."¹

The findings of this report could hardly come as a surprise. The Chamber of Mines had investigated the Chinese and found them acceptable for its purposes, and a number of the leading men of the Chamber had already spoken out in favor of the indenture of Chinese labour. All the Rand speculated about the findings of the Royal Labour Commission; most agreed that they would show that a sufficient supply of labour was not available. It was expected that upon their publication, a draft importation ordinance would be transmitted to the Colonial Secretary. It would still take quite a while to secure the Chinese even if the ordinance were approved.² These speculations, though wrong on a number of counts, foretold the major conclusions of the Commission. A draft ordinance to serve as working statement was secretly sent to England before publication of the findings. Although many changes were made in the draft, it remained the basic ordinance.³

¹Enclosed in a letter from Sir Arthur Lawley, Acting Governor to Lyttelton, October 6, 1903 in Cd. 1895, 1904, pp. 77-87.
²Times, October 17 and 19, 1903; Guardian, November 12, 1903.
³Letter from Lawley to Lyttelton, November 16, 1903 in Cd. 1895, 1904, pp. 119-127.
The twelve-man Commission included a majority known to favor
the Chinese before the Commission ever met, including Sir George Farrar,
the outspoken advocate of Chinese labour. One man, H. Mortimer Zefferitt,
representing the White Labour League, refused to appear before the Com­
mission as a protest against its composition. Among the witnesses
called, the mining industry was heavily represented. The positions of
the ninety-two individuals who testified could be broken down; twenty
officials of the government, seventeen farmers, twenty-three representa­
tives of the mines, nineteen labour organizers, recruiters, etc. of
whom eleven worked for the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, four
missionaries, two natives, and seven of miscellaneous occupations.

The Commission broadly interpreted its terms of reference in
inquiring into the labour requirements of the Transvaal. It had to
determine the needs of the foreign countries from which Kaffirs were
recruited as well as South Africa in order to calculate available labour
for the Rand. These hearings were, for the most part, open to the
public and the local news reporters.

The Commission heard varied reasons for the shortage of Kaffir
labour. Some witnesses testified that the major reason for the shortage
could be found in Kaffir tribal customs. It was possible for a man to
work six months or less, thereby earning enough money to buy himself a
wife who would support him for the rest of his life. Some of the more

4 Cd. 1896, 1904, pp. 111 and 322.

5 Dr. Aneas Munro, The Transvaal Chinese Labour Problem (London:

6 Cd. 1896, 1904, pp. 1-3.
warlike tribes considered male manual labour degrading. Other witnesses felt the natives would not work in the mines because of the poor conditions to which they would be subjected. The natives complained about the high native death rate, food, wages, being sent to work at a different mine from the one for which they had contracted, and physical beatings from the overseers. One witness claimed the men got scurvy from the kiln-dried mealie which formed the basic staple.  

What the evidence presented clearly showed was that there was too little labour for the various industrial needs of the Transvaal. Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, one of the leading owners, presented the owners' preference for Kaffir labour because the operators were accustomed to the blacks and knew their capabilities. The only problem was to secure enough of the blacks. While rejecting the use of white labour as uneconomical, he would not comment upon the relative cost of black versus Asiatic labour as he had not investigated the cost although he knew that blacks were cheaper than any other unskilled labour in use. It was impossible to know the true cost of importing other unskilled labour without an experiment. Fitzpatrick also voiced concern over the question of how manageable these outsiders would be.

The longest and most gloomy report of the situation was submitted by Jacobus N. Dejongh, the incumbent President of the Chamber of Mines. In response to a question, he said that the labour requirements of the rest of the country had increased so much as to further diminish

7 Ibid., pp. 13 and 252-258.
8 Ibid., pp. 401-430.
the number of available natives. Practically no employer in South Africa, according to the Chamber's survey, had sufficient labour. He claimed the country needed 350,714 labourers though only 197,667 were available. He estimated that within five years 650,574 would be needed. If these figures, which the Chairman of the Commission termed very high, were correct, the future deficit of over 100,000 would be impossible to correct without imported labour.  

While General Botha, himself a farmer, agreed with other farmers that Kaffir labour was scarce, he believed the shortage was only temporary. Though after the war no labour had been available, his own and his neighbors supply continued to grow. The existing conditions were abnormal; there would in time be enough labour. If more natives were needed, they could be secured by breaking up the large native locations and sending the blacks to live and work on the farms. The native could also be compelled to work by raising his taxes. The former Boer General thought the importation of Asiatics detrimental to the best interests of the country. He preferred whites to coolies as unskilled labour, however he did not know where or when these whites would be available. He, therefore, suggested that the matter of white labour be thoroughly investigated before reaching any decision on any other type of labour.  

The majority report of the Commission fulfilled the hopes of the mine owners, as had been predicted. It pointed out that the

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9 Ibid., p. 432.
10 Ibid., pp. 502-506.
inadequate supply of farm labour was due partly to the farmers' inability to pay wages as high as those in the mines. If the farms developed normally, the native labour requirement for the next five years would be quadrupled. Turning to the mines, the majority report based its conclusions on evidence presented by the Chamber of Mines, "whose accuracy was not impaired by other witnesses." It found the Rand needed 142,473 natives for production and 30,227 for the development of new mines. The mines were short a total of 117,193 Kaffir labourers resulting in an estimated loss of an estimated three million pounds sterling per year in dividends.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 13-16.}

The native population of the Transvaal approximated 600,000. "In this population 137,839 are adult males of whom 55,466 were estimated to be now at work, and the number given as 'available but not at work' was 39,503, but it [was] probable that many of the natives included in this latter figure take up farming work during some portion of the year." The report did not see much additional labour elsewhere in Africa. In the area north of latitude twenty-two south, the northern boundary of the Transvaal, the Commission "after carefully considering the character of the inhabitants of those regions, the facility with which their needs are satisfied at their homes, the distances that have to be traveled to reach the Transvaal, the attitude of the local authorities and the white settlers, [was] of the opinion that the Transvaal [could not] expect any material amelioration of its labour difficulties from that quarter." The small territories south of the
latitude might furnish a few men for the mines, 10,000 at the most. These could be secured only by depriving the home territories of labour that they themselves needed.\textsuperscript{12}

The Commission was convinced that "the principal causes affecting the labour supply must be sought in the conditions affecting the native in his home and kraal and not until these conditions [were] greatly modified [could] any great improvement occur." There was some hope that contact with European civilization would slowly change native standards which, then, would compel the native to work more in order to supply his new wants.\textsuperscript{13}

In assessing the activities of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association and the accusations against it, the Commission found:

No evidence whatever was brought forward in support of these accusations, and the Commission is satisfied that the officials of the particular organization carried out their work zealously and efficiently, and are, as a whole, well qualified for their special work. Money has been freely spent and the attempt to meet the shortfall of labour on the mines has been in the judgement of the Commission, genuine and well directed.\textsuperscript{14}

The report stated that though many important witnesses felt the native should be compelled to work, the prospect of changing conditions, such as breaking up the native locations, would not be satisfactory. In addition, increased taxation was completely overestimated as a means of bringing the native into the mines. In regard to white men in unskilled positions in the mines, the Commission found it did not want to enter

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., pp. 20, 32-33.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., pp. 34-36.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., pp. 36-37.
into the controversial parts of the question, but pointed out that no white men had been continuously employed in rough manual labour in the thirty years of the gold fields. "It is reasonable to suppose that if the use of such labour was economically advantageous the self-interest of the employers would have discovered these advantages within the periods mentioned, and a gradual displacement of black by white would have occurred." The Commission was certain that whites would not compete successfully with the blacks in the rougher classes of labour.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 38-40.}

The minority report concluded, "There was great divergence of opinion amongst the witnesses as to the possibility of improving the labour supply from sources within the area of reference by legislative or other action, but, in the opinion of the Commission, none of those remedial measures [offered] a practical solution to the problem." The demand exceeded the supply by 129,000 and it was estimated that the mines alone would require an additional 196,000 labourers within the next five years.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 41-42.}

The minority differed primarily in evaluation of the evidence. The minority felt great care should be taken to determine the exact requirements to be sure that these were legitimate. Then it was necessary to ascertain whether or not, the requirements, if they were satisfied, would assist the development of the whole country.\footnote{Ibid., p. 54.}
principle evidence had been presented by the Chamber of Mines which was formed to protect the interest of the shareholder and to see that the mines "pay the largest dividends possible to their absentee principals and this without any regard to local feeling and opinion." The minority believed the Chamber to be following a policy of the "perpetuation of the Inferior Race Labour System by the importation of Asiatics. . . ." This policy was opposed to any growth of a large white working class population. "The fundamental difference between the majority of our colleagues and ourselves is based upon the fact, therefore, that they accept without question, and as a whole, the evidence of the Chamber of Mines, while we, after close scrutiny, find ourselves unable to do so."

The minority was forced to conclude there was sufficient labour in Central and South Africa, although it admitted that a hard effort was needed to secure it. The existing shortage was due to temporary and preventable causes. Defining future needs as those which would benefit everyone, the minority thought there was enough labour for the future. It also entered the white labour debate saying, "the supply of native labour can be supplemented and superseded by white labour." The Times correspondent, commenting on the report, said that though the mining houses have used the cost of white labour for refusing this alternative, "there can be little doubt that what has carried more weight with them has been the strike bogey and the inherent dislike of

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18 Ibid., pp. 45-46.
19 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
all colonies to see a 'mean white' population side by side with the native community." The importation of Asiatics was at best a confession of weakness, "a desperate remedy as a last resource." 20

The only real criticism of the Commission in Johannesburg appeared in the Star, which under the editorship of W. F. Moneypenny had been consistently against the mining concerns. It disagreed with the estimate of available labour and considered "the failure of the Commission to elicit precise information on this point one of the greatest blots on its work." Volkstem, the Boer organ, declared only that such a vital question should be decided not by the Imperial Government in England but by the majority of the people in the Transvaal. 21

In England, the Guardian, criticizing the Commission, asked at what standard wage was there a shortage of labour. Even in England there was a labour shortage at low wages. England had fought to build a healthy white colony, which now was to be converted to allow cheap Chinese imports instead of white working men. The least that could be done would be to publish the relative costs so that the whole world would know how much the mine owners stood to make on their proposals. 22

The Times, more acquiescent, said the Commission did no more than make official the opinion long held by those in the colonies. The way was paved for the introduction of Chinese labour as "the best possible, though by no means the most desirable," solution to the labour

20 *Times, November 23, 1903.
21 *Ibid., November 30, 1903.
22 November 23, 1903.
problem. It was only a temporary solution as the whites in South Africa would not allow permanent Asiatic labour. The "conditions under which Chinese labour will be admitted to South Africa will be, and will probably remain, abnormal. . . ." 23

The Commission and its majority report had done a lot to prepare the way for the eventual importation of Chinese labour. The owners could now find official agreement with their labour shortage cries. Although this successful preparation was the first step, a long hard road remained to be traversed before the necessary legislation and assurances would be completed and the first Chinese began his work.

Shortly after the publication of the Commission report, Mr. Wilfred J. Wybergh, Commissioner of Mines in the Transvaal Government, resigned his position. He said, "there had been a general divergence of opinion between the Government and himself on questions affecting the industrial and mining population." Though ascribing good motives to the Government, he thought that in mining matters it had lost touch with the people. He advocated the use of unskilled white labour, providing an experienced leader for this cause. 24

The Chamber of Mines lost no time pressing home its case. A meeting of the Chamber in early December unanimously adopted a resolution declaring that since the Labour Commission had found an inadequate supply of labour, the Chamber urged the government to recognize "the

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23 November 23, 1903.

24 Times, December 3, 1903.
necessity of immediate legislation to provide for the introduction of indentured coloured labour under restrictions."  

Once the vote of the Chamber became public, W. F. Moneypenny found his position on the Star untenable. He had consistently opposed the introduction of Chinese labour, even though his paper was owned by a group of men who were members of the Chamber of Mines. The day after the vote, Moneypenny wrote a leading article disassociating the paper from the policy of the Chamber. At the same time he resigned his position without pressure, he stated a few days later.  

The first legislative action to import the Chinese would have to come from the Transvaal Legislative Council. This official body had been composed of Transvaal officials and representatives appointed by Lord Milner. In an attempt to make it truly representative of all peoples he had even invited Botha and Smuts, but both refused. The Council represented not the people of the Transvaal, but rather the industrial British sections of the population. In the formal opening of the Transvaal Legislative Council, Sir Arthur Lawley, the Acting High Commissioner of South Africa in Milner's continued absence, "announced that the Council would be asked to discuss whether, in view of the conclusions furnished by the Commission, and taking into consideration the liabilities to which the country was committed, it was advisable to supplement the supply of labour available in Africa by the importation of indentured labour." He added that no legislation would be brought

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25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., December 4 and 5, 1903.
forward until the Council had given its opinion and the consent of the Imperial Government had been obtained. The same day, Sir George Farrar gave notice of a motion concerning the importation of indentured labour.27

As the year 1903 drew to a close, Sir George Farrar moved in the Legislative Council:

That the attention of the Government be called to the Report of the Transvaal Labour Commission; that the Government be requested to introduce a draft ordinance providing for the importation of indentured unskilled coloured labourers for the purpose of supplementing the supply of labour in the mines in the Witwatersrand Area, under such restrictions as will ensure their employment as unskilled workmen only and their return to their native country on completion of their contracts; and that in order to secure full consideration of the important issue involved such draft ordinance be published in English and Dutch for a reasonable time before being introduced into this Council.28

Presenting this motion which Sir Percy Fitzpatrick formally seconded, Farrar virtually summed up the majority report of the Labour Commission. He accused the minority of refusing to accept the evidence presented. One reason whites were uneconomical, he said, was that they needed a higher wage rate because of the high cost of living in Johannesburg. The mine owner agreed that it was folly to import a great number. The first ten thousand, which was all he wanted for an experiment, would cost two hundred thousand pounds. He felt the owners would not want to spend more until they found out how well those would work and what trouble they would give.29

27December 9, 1903 in Cd. 1895, 1904, p. 128.
28December 27, 1903 in Transcript from the Star in Cd. 1895, 1904, p. 246.
29Ibid., pp. 246-249 and 261-263.
The opposition tried first to postpone the debate, pleading not enough time to study the evidence. After this failed, Henry C. Hull, later Minister of Finance in the first Union Cabinet and a leading opponent of Chinese labour, stated that the Council was going to be damned whichever stand it took. He did not believe that the Commission had been disinterested since those men with the greatest vested interest had been sitting on the Commission. He then followed the argument of the minority so that the debate resembled a rehash of the reports of the Commission. He pleaded for the members of the Legislative Council to vote as their consciences dictated. 30

The Boer members of the Council, while declaring themselves independent, agreed to support the mines to help the major industry of the land. In addition, it might well free more natives to work on the short-handed farms. Thus, when the opposition forced a division, the result was an overwhelming victory for the mines and Chinese labour. The vote was twenty-two to four. 31

Lord Milner, returning to South Africa, assessed the vote of the Legislative Council in a telegram to Lyttelton saying, "The vote in the Legislative Council, in my opinion, faithfully represents the present state of public opinion and the great change which has come over it." A year before, Farrar would have found little support and even in August, the opinion was equally divided. "Today I consider the scale had turned decisively in favour of imported labour," the

Governor said. He recognized the gravity of the problem, but said it had to be submitted to the Council.  

The draft ordinance, published in early January, 1904, in the *Gazette* in Pretoria, did not apply, of course, to Kaffirs who would work in the mines. The ordinance carefully described the exact terms by which Asiatics were to be hired, the type of work they could do, the length of service, and the necessary repatriation. The regulations to govern the conditions of life were to be drawn up later.

Milner thought that publication of the draft ordinance had been placidly received with a general approval of its provisions even by those who remained opposed in principle. Though no one really liked the idea of importing Chinese labour, the "great majority of the people are disposed to accept it as a proved necessity." This attitude would be strengthened by a decrease in employment figures for December. He believed the maximum supply of natives was being furnished to the mines.

When a deputation waited upon Milner to ask for a referendum, he refused. He said enough opportunity had been provided for the opposition to present its opinion. If the Legislative Council passed the ordinance, he would require very strong evidence that the people did not want Chinese labour before he would refuse the ordinance. He had done his best to learn the country's opinion and he was convinced

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32 January 3, 1904 in Cd. 1895, 1904, p. 176.

33 *Times*, January 7, 1904; *Guardian*, January 7, 1904.

34 Telegram from Milner to Lyttelton, January 11, 1904, in Cd. 1899, 1904, pp. 4-5.
that the greatest number were content to see Asiatic labour although no one really liked it. The government's policy was to develop the mines as fully as possible in order to apply the revenues to further the development of the country as a whole.\textsuperscript{35}

To further convince London of the change in public opinion in the Transvaal and to hurry the draft ordinance through the Legislative Council, a huge petition was drawn up to be signed by all white men of the Transvaal. Despite opposition from the Boers and other opponents of Chinese labour, when the petition was presented to the Legislative Council, it contained some 45,000 signatures out of an estimated possible 80,000 males. This 80,000 included, however, some 15,000 government employees who did not sign the petition.\textsuperscript{36} If all the signatures were accurate, this represented a tremendous number. Milner used this petition to press his case to Lyttelton. He indicated that the signatures had been carefully collected and thus should receive careful consideration. He said some 47,000 males over sixteen had signed the petition, inflating the statistics a bit. He also pointed out that no one had attempted to secure an opposition petition.\textsuperscript{37}

The Legislative Council, while debating the ordinance in the Committee stage, heard a motion introduced deprecating the influence of the Imperial Government in the labour question. The motion was defeated, but it was obvious that some were willing to take on the

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Times}, January 22, 1904; \textit{Guardian}, January 22, 1904.

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Times}, January 25 and 26, 1904.

\textsuperscript{37}Telegram from Milner to Lyttelton, January 29, 1904 in Cd. 1899, 1904, p. 4.
reluctant Home Government as well as the local Chinese opposition. The ordinance then passed and was ready for its final reading, which it quickly passed a week later. It contained a clause suspending its operation until the Transvaal received His Majesty's Government's approval.  

General Botha and the other Boer leaders wrote to Lyttelton opposing the decision:

Speaking in our individual capacities, but yet as fully acquainted with the sentiments of the Boer population, we assure you that the overwhelming majority of them are unalterably opposed to the introduction of Asiatic labour into the Transvaal, under whatever restrictions. The Labour Commission was not an impartial or representative body, nor do we agree with its findings. Many signatures to the petition presented to the Legislative Council in favour of Asiatic labour were improperly obtained. The Legislative Council is in no sense representative of the Transvaal people, and it would be a fatal mistake to introduce Asiatic labour without full and popular consent. It would prevent this from ever becoming a white man's country, and it would injure the native population by excluding them from participating in the industrial development of the country. In view of the grave issues involved, we are most anxious that His Majesty's Minister who is directly responsible for the administration of the Transvaal shall not remain under the mistaken impression that the Boer people are in favour of a measure which is looked upon as a public calamity of the first magnitude, for which the temporary slackness of the labour market forms no excuse.

Milner in relaying this message commented that the Boers were merely trying to make political capital out of the situation. He restated his original position that the Boer population was willing to allow the Chinese and that some even favored the measure.  

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38 *Times*, February 4, 10, and 11, 1904.

Within a few days, VanRensburg, a Boer member of the Legislative Council, wrote to Lyttelton stating that Botha did not truly represent the Boers. Only one of the five Boer members of the Council would gladly stand against Botha in an election and be sure of success. Four of the Boer members of the Council had voted for the ordinance. He could only conclude that Botha was trying to split Boer and Briton.

The Transvaal Government had declared it was in favor of the Chinese through its appointive Legislative Council. While there could be endless debate whether or not the Council truly represented the people, there could be no doubt that as the official government body it approved the importation of Chinese. The colony had pushed as far as possible; now, the decision was out of its hands. The question had to be decided by the Imperial Government. As much as the leaders of the Transvaal had cried that the country was self-governing on internal matters, they could not make the final decision.

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40 Times, February 15, 1904.
CHAPTER IV

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT DECISION

The South African labour situation was now in the hands of the British Government. Parliamentary review destroyed the fiction of colonial self-government and of Tory claims that the Transvaal determined its own destiny. The parties differed only in matters of procedure as the Liberals wanted to consider the issue strictly as new British legislation while the Conservatives merely desired to pass judgment upon the Transvaal's actions. Regardless of which position one accepted, the issue remained in the hands of the Imperial Parliament.

Preparing for the British Government's moves, Lyttelton circulated a Cabinet memorandum summing up the moves which had taken place. After pointing out the difficulties which the Chinese would present, he devoted particular attention to the Chamberlain argument that there should be some sort of referendum before approval. He pointed out that Chamberlain did not consider either the Labour Commission Report or the voice of the Legislative Council as an expression of this public approval in the Transvaal. Despite these objections, the Cabinet agreed that the matter should be debated at the earliest possible moment.¹

¹Great Britain, Cabinet Papers, 37/67 No. 75, November 14, 1903, pp. 4-7.
The debate began in the House of Lords when the Earl of Portsmouth said the Chinese would be mere human machinery and that Britain should govern the colonies for the benefit of the people and not for her own commerce. He thought the British Christian conscience strong enough to prevent importation of the Chinese. Churchmen in the Lords and some outside expressed concern about what moral horrors might be found in the proposed labour camps. There were still no formal provisions for admitting women and children. The Archbishop of Canterbury also wanted to know the government's plans for the colony. Just what would the additional profit be used for? Upon Foreign Secretary Lansdowne's promise to provide more information, Lord Ripon withdrew a motion of concern warning that nothing should be done inconsistent with public morals.

The Times viewed "the immigration of Chinamen as a measure in itself undesirable, which nothing but urgent pressure of circumstances [made] a necessity." British workmen could not hope to go out to South Africa unless the mines expanded and this expansion depended upon Chinese labour. Boer members of the Legislative Council spoke and voted for Chinese labour, and it was doubtful that Botha and his friends truly represented the people of the Transvaal. The Guardian, on the other hand, commented that practically all agitation and evidence in support of Chinese labour could be traced to the Chamber of Mines or

2Debates (Lords), CXXIX, 971-972 (February 11, 1904).
3Ibid., 1004, 1182-1183.
4February 13, 1904.
its representatives. Both technical and independent sources said that Chinese labour would not help. Many of those who in 1902 had called for white labour, because it was the only alternative, jumped at the possibility of the cheaper Chinese. When the Legislative Council gave its assent to the Chinese ordinance, the Guardian protested:

There is, of course, no parallel for such a monstrous state of things under the British flag, nor under any civilized flag, for any class of people but convicts, and there has been none since the United States abolished Negro slavery. . . . It will no doubt be said that if you are to introduce Chinese in great numbers into a South African colony you will do less harm by introducing them as slaves than you would by introducing them as freemen. But the only valid conclusion to be drawn from this is that you should remove any doubts as to Mr. Lyttelton's hearty co-operation with Lord Milner in the Chinese scheme and the situation is there as definite and alarming as it could possibly be.5

Lord Lansdowne at the Foreign Office suggested that the draft ordinance be submitted to the Chinese emissary in London, Chang Ta-Jen, "with a suggestion that if there are any points in it on which he requires further explanation they should be provisionally discussed by a Committee on which the Chinese legation and the Foreign and Colonial Offices should be represented."6 Lyttelton agreed to this proposal which marked another break with the assumption that the Chinese should not help create internal regulations for a part of the Empire.7

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5February 15 and 16, 1904.


7Colonial Office to the Foreign Office, February 2, 1904; ibid., p. 2.
Lord Lansdowne then sent a copy of the draft ordinance to the Chinese delegation in London asking whether, in the latter's opinion, the ordinance was "one in which Regulations acceptable to the Chinese Government could be framed." Chang Ta-Jen replied, thanking the British Government for the courtesy of including him in an internal matter and stating that there was nothing in the ordinance which would conflict with anything he had to propose. He believed there should be Chinese consular agents to protect the workers, but anything else was simply a matter of wording.  

The government insisted upon immediate discussion of Chinese labour, the only opportunity coming in a Liberal amendment to the Address from the Throne. Sir Herbert Samuel, later a territorial administrator for the Mandate of Palestine and Trans-Jordan, moved, "we humbly represent to your majesty that it is highly inexpedient that sanction should be given to any ordinance permitting the introduction of indentured Chinese labour into the Transvaal Colony until the approval of the colonists has been formally ascertained." The Liberals were not willing to simply condemn the entire proposal, but to attack on the grounds that the people of the Transvaal had not voted on it. Samuel argued that the available low class Chinese had been found "unendurable" by other white nations which had tried them. The needed numbers, which Farrar had estimated, would be impossible to keep penned and their mixing with the whites, and worse with the natives, would

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8 Exchange of letters February 4 and 11, 1904; ibid., pp. 3-4.
9 Debates (Commons), CXXIX, 1501, February 11, 1904.
produce "great moral evils." He then attacked the proposed restrictive measures complaining that "apparently the Transvaal Government had gone to the statute-books of the slave States of America for a model for their ordinance." Samuel condemned the mines for not employing white labour because it would require a reorganization of the industry and because it created a possibility for the rise of organized labor. He termed the Royal Commission a farce, since its report could be predicted before a single witness had been heard. Returning to approval of Chinese labour by the people, he wanted to know why the government, if it really wanted a self-governing colony, was afraid of a referendum. The majority of the people supposedly approved of the Chinese, so they could not lose.10

The motion was seconded by an unhappy Conservative, Major Jack Seely, a close friend of Winston Churchill and part of his group of young renegade Tories, who, aware of the gravity of refusing the ordinance, feared that the dangers of acceptance were greater. When he complained of the indecent haste with which the government was forcing the issue through the Commons, the Colonial Secretary, Lyttelton, answered that the Transvaal was basically an industrial state founded upon one industry, gold. He said the economic situation there was getting progressively worse and quoted both Milner and Lawley to back this statement. As for the charge of governmental pressure upon members of the Legislative Council, Lyttelton repudiated any such suggestion, reminding the House that the official members of the Council

10 Ibid., 1502-1520.
had been released for a free vote. He termed a referendum upon the matter an impossibility, since the problem was urgent and there was no accurate and current voters' register. Also, any attempt to create a register would raise questions of voter eligibility which were best avoided as they tended to reawaken old animosities. Examination of the mines themselves revealed the definite attempts by the owners to secure native labour. As for substitutes, Lyttelton said, whites simply would not do the blacks' work. Even if there were unskilled whites, they would be more apt to come from other less well-developed areas of Europe than from England. Discussing the moral evil charge, he said that all Chinese would be allowed their families and that he would personally guarantee this right.

Liberal members pressed the argument further. Sydney Buxton, whose South African interest continued from the days of the Jameson investigation, said if the Chinese were permitted entry, the gates would be open for a yellow flood; and, if this measure were passed, he hoped a future government would be able to repeal it. A backbencher termed the matter a simple problem. The House and the country would find out who was for and against slavery in the Empire. Henry Labouchere, the old radical Liberal, claimed that if the government were to call the Legislative Council representative, then the British House of Lords was representative.

11 Ibid., 1523, 1530, and 1535-1540.
12 Ibid., 1545-1548 and 1551.
13 Ibid., 1560-1561, 1580 and 1598.
In reopening debate the following day, the Tories suggested that those who opposed the ordinance were simply out to discredit Milner and the British Government in South Africa. These men had sided with the Boers in all that really mattered for the development of the British Transvaal. It was concluded that the opposition stemmed from prejudices against the mine owners and their class. One Conservative even went so far as to admit that perhaps the slave states of America had advantages when he said, "that the introduction of slaves had undoubtedly contributed to the material progress of the country by providing labourers for work which whites would not do." Seely attempted to get him to withdraw or modify the statement, but the member would do neither, claiming the fact was historically true.14

One of the Liberal backbenchers prophesied that the ordinance would create a convict settlement in South Africa, modified by a forty-eight hour pass, which he termed inconsistent with the elementary notions of freedom. Pointing out a steady rise in the output of gold since the end of the war, he concluded, "If a colony, after such a war, was not content with a steady rise in its output of gold, it was hard to please."15 John Burns, the labour representative, indicated that the Negro slave in America had been better treated than the Chinese would be. He believed the mining companies would gain additional profits by selling rotten food and diseased meat. They would, furthermore, subject the Chinamen to "loathsome conditions."16

14Ibid., CXXX 130, 47, 50, and 72-73 (February 17, 1904).
15Ibid., 37-45.
16Ibid., 97-98.
Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal leader, closed the debate for his party stating that the Chinese proposal was never presented for English mines when they had been in trouble and they had survived without indentured labour. He protested against self-government of any kind in a crown colony arguing that the Imperial Government should notduck its responsibility. Furthermore, why should this transitional time be used to lay a burden on the colony from which it might not be able to recover. 17

Mr. William St. John Broderick, the Tory War Minister, summing up the Conservative arguments, rehashed the earlier arguments and then compared the proposed lot of the Chinese to the British Army, observing that the Army was not free to do as it pleased nor could its members take leave whenever they so desired. In the ensuing division the Liberal Amendment to the Address was lost by 230 to 281. 18

Many of the prominent figures of the Liberal Party had not entered the debate, and the Times suggested that these men might not wish to be hampered in their action if they achieved power. It thought the opposition, which included sixty-three Irish Nationalist votes, was anti-Milner and aimed to wreck his programs. The same day the paper published a letter from John T. Donogh, Recorded of St. Mary's in Johannesburg, pointing out that no protest had been heard from the religious bodies in the Transvaal. "These bodies are very much alive and are not likely to enter into a conspiracy of silence, did they

17 Ibid., 103-106.
18 Ibid., 109-110 and 124.
believe the interests of morality to be menaced," he said. The letter also pointed out the great evangelistic possibilities the importation presented. His Majesty Edward VII in a letter March 15, 1904 to Lyttelton expressed his interest in Chinese labour. He also expressed his "great regret that so much heated opposition should have been shown to such a necessary measure as the Chinese Labour Bill."19

The Guardian's main objection was not racial exclusiveness; but rather, that the importation would render a system of free government impossible, bringing about instead a "system of yellow servitude." The government's actions made it impossible to achieve the great dream of federation as "there can be no federation between a community of half-slave and of freedom-loving colonists."20 Labour's condemnation of the Chinese ordinance was more outspoken than the Guardian's. The Trades Union Congress meeting in convention in Leeds unanimously adopted a resolution protesting the ordinance claiming it was "opposed to the best interests of His Majesty's subjects at home and abroad, sanctions conditions of labour unfit for human beings, and is contrary to the anti-slavery tradition of the British Empire. Justice saw the capitalistic class control over the British Government in action when it said, "the bidding of the Park Lane 'helots' has been dutifully carried out by the British House of Commons, and the establishment of a perfect system of slavery under the British flag has been sanctioned by the Imperial Legislature. The Yorkshire Factory Times called the decision

20February 18, 1904.
"a studied blow at labour. . . . Plant the Chinaman in South Africa and he is on the highway to England."\(^{21}\)

Sir George Farrar, assessing the effect of the Commons action, promised that the labour ordinance now accepted by the House of Commons "would be rigidly supervised by the Government. The interests of local trade and artisans would be safeguarded." He believed this gave the Transvaal a very bright future.\(^{22}\) The Boer reaction remained more pessimistic. Botha sent out a circular letter to a number of leading Boers in an attempt to gain Boer support to protest the ordinance. Some fifteen of the leading Boers signed the protest. Smuts realized that the Boer protest could not have much success. In a letter to Emily Hobhouse he set forth the Boer feelings when he said:

> We are preparing for the coming invasion and are being gradually moulded to the coming environment. Truly to be weak is to be miserable. To see your fate coming, coming, coming, and to be unable to offer any effective opposition; to be so weak as to be only capable of feeling self-pity, even self-contempt is the direct punishment which could be inflicted on a human being. . . . As sure as I write here there is a God that will judge; now is our darkness and the agony of bloody sweat.\(^{23}\)

Milner asked for immediate assent to the ordinance for the sake of local business. He promised that he had made notes of all

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\(^{22}\)Times, February 19, 1904.

Lyttelton's promises and pledges and that all would be closely adhered to. He also wrote the Colonial Secretary a personal letter thanking him for his part in passing the ordinance through the House of Commons:

... This week I should have written, in any case, to thank you for what you have done for us about the Labour question. Evidently the situation at home with regard to it was extremely difficult. You were right and I was wrong as to the amount of trouble you were likely to have over it in Parliament. All the more cause have we to be grateful to you for making so strong and successful a fight. ...25

Lyttelton answered that in the absence of the machinery which would be provided by the Regulations, and before arrangements for reception of the immigrants and for their introduction through Durban were made, it was not possible for him to sanction the ordinance. The Colonial Secretary needed proof that the pledges were carried out and the arrangements complete. Later, Lyttelton told Milner that when he had received assurance from South Africa that the Governor was satisfied with local arrangements and the owners agreed to bear the cost of importing the wives and children, the Royal Sanction would be given. The sanction would not, however, mean immediate embarkation as the regulations were not complete and the Chinese arrangements were not set. He hoped the sanction would be of value in other ways to the Transvaal. Milner replied he was satisfied that local arrangements had been made to receive the labourers and that the owners would bear the cost of


Chinese families. He agreed that "immediate assent will have a political effect even if it does not relieve the economic strain." 26

Despite the fact that the Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Montague Omnanorey and other Civil servants felt the action hasty, the Colonial Secretary then cabled assent on March 11, 1904, delaying the operation of the ordinance. The delay did not mean a modifying clause, but rather was one "of fact and had reference to certain appointments of officials as necessary to carry out the ordinance not yet made and certain arrangements with the Chinese Government under the Treaty of Peking not yet completed." 27

Partially because of the speed with which negotiations for Chinese labour were moving, certain Liberals continued to attack the proposals in Parliament. Thomas Macnamara moved the adjournment of the House of Commons on February 23, 1904 to discuss Chinese labour, charging it had been passed in "indecent haste" without giving the opposition time to study the papers. Besides the regulations, really the heart of the proposal, were not yet published. The Liberals lost the motion by a larger margin than before, 212 to 156. 28

The House of Lords first discussed a vote of no confidence when Lord Coleridge moved, "This House disapproves of the importation of Chinese labour into the Transvaal under the recent ordinance until the

26 Telegrams from Lyttelton to Milner of February 22 and March 9, 1904 and from Milner to Lyttelton on March 10 and 11, 1904 in Cd. 1941, p. 39 and Cd. 1896, 1904, pp. 6-8.


28 Debates (Lords), CXXX, 31 and 668 (March 18, 1904).
grant to that country of full representative Government." In the two-
day debate which followed, the Liberals pointed out once again that the
ordinance was a new departure in English politics. The regulations were
not added because of the rough character of the men, but simply because
the workmen were to be Asiatic.29

The Bishop of Hereford claimed that the government was out of
touch with the people. "In the minds of the English people the real
issue is the moral issue. . . . Veil it as you would, you have in this
ordinance the essence of slavery. It partakes of slavery. The condi-
tions are servile and you cannot get away from it." The government was
misled when it listened only to the mine owners. The Bishop's speech
then degenerated into a personal attack upon Lord Milner. He accused
the High Commissioner of using intemperate language and misinterpreting
the available evidence. Viscount Goschen immediately defended Milner
pointing out his good qualities and his many years of loyal service to
South Africa and the Crown.30 Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary
and the leader of the Lords, closed the debate stating the ordinance
suited the requirements of the Transvaal and that the government was
fully prepared to accept responsibility for the measure. The motion of
censure was defeated by a vote of 97-25.31

On March 21, 1904, in the Commons, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman
moved, "That this House disapproves of the conduct of His Majesty's

29 Ibid., CXXX, 4 and 23-24.
30 Ibid., 117-121 and 129-130.
31 Ibid., 210-213.
Government in advising the Crown not to disallow the ordinance for the introduction of Chinese labour into the Transvaal." He attacked the Labour Commission showing it had a majority chosen from the very industry which would most benefit from Asiatic labour. He reminded the Tories that Chamberlain, as Colonial Secretary, had opposed Chinese labour in 1903. He felt the mine owners' requirements were simple:

Cheap and abundant labour, unenfranchised labour, labour incapable of combination—these are the three essentials that the mineowners require in their workers; and as the Kaffir is too dear, as the British workmen suffer from the same liability, and has, besides, a stubborn and ineradicable taste for freedom and citizenship, the mineowners have fallen back upon the Chinaman.

When he was interrupted to be asked if he would promise to repeal the ordinance if elected, he only replied, "Will you put me in power?" He also indicated that while the Chinese employment under the suggested conditions might not be slavery, it had many of the features of slavery. The Colonial Secretary, opening debate for the Tories, denied that Chinese labour was slavery. The men signed on in China of their own volition and only after having the terms carefully explained to them several times. They would receive passes for leaves from the compounds and were to be restricted only to the mine property which in some cases included prominent parts of the city or countryside. When Jack Seely arose to again attack his own party's position, the Conservatives were not willing to afford him the opportunity.

After Winston Churchill complained of the "vulgar noise" which kept him

32 Ibid., cols., 254-259, 263, and 272.
33 Ibid., 280-281.
from hearing his friend, the Major said he had resigned his seat in protest. He thought the so-called Imperialist Party was doing great harm to two great colonies very much opposed to the Chinese, namely Australia and New Zealand.\(^{34}\)

The Prime Minister, Balfour, compared the prospective Chinese labourers with the merchant marine. He thought each had the same amount of freedom. He didn't hear complaints about the merchant; yet there were great complaints about the Chinese and he could not see why. He was sure the Liberals would have to continue the policy regardless of their protests, since not to do so would harm the prosperity of the Transvaal. He noted that Campbell-Bannerman had been "prudent" enough not to make a definite statement.\(^{35}\)

H. H. Asquith, closing the debate, said, "The plain fact is this, that without any clear mandate from the Transvaal itself, in defiance, as I believe, of the predominant sentiment both of this country and of the Empire at large, hurrying and rushing a situation which, if ever there was one, needed a quiet hand and a patient temper, you are by means of this ordinance putting in jeopardy the whole future of South Africa." For the third time in the Commons the Liberals lost the vote, this time by fifty-seven votes, 242 to 299.\(^{36}\) Despite the fact that the majority had not substantially changed, the Liberals kept up the pressure.

\(^{34}\)Ibid., 335-337.
\(^{35}\)Ibid., 349-350 and 355.
\(^{36}\)Ibid., 367-368.
The newspaper reaction was as one would suspect. The Times thought the opposition "recklessly antagonistic to the ideas and interests of South Africa," while the Guardian called the debate very close and said only party organization and pressure saved Chinese labour. It hoped the people would remember the voting record when the general election came.37

The Liberals continued their opposition outside Parliament now that they had received consistent defeats from within. Sir William Harcourt, the old Liberal leader, in a letter to the editor of the Times, discussing the impact of the Chinese labour question, said:

We are to have a referendum of our own before long, and I venture to predict that this is an issue which is likely to occupy a principal place in its decision. I think the Government might have waited for their "Chinese Mandate" instead of "hustling" through the House of Commons with a greatly reduced majority a measure which I firmly believe is condemned by the conscience of the nation.38

The National Liberal Club, with Lord Carrington presiding, passed unanimously a resolution against Chinese labour. Lord Crewe, later to be Colonial Secretary, presiding at a meeting of the Eighty Club said there was great disappointment over Chinese labour and that it would cost the government more than any other of its misdeeds.39

37 Times, March 22, 1904; Guardian, March 22, 1904.
38 Times, February 22, 1904.
The National Liberal Federation, in its annual meeting in Manchester, produced a resolution against Chinese Labour as follows:

That this Council protests against the ordinance permitting the introduction of indentured Chinese labour into the Transvaal, and whilst challenging the statement that cheap foreign labour is a commercial necessity, places on record its conviction that the proposal is inconsistent with the common law of England, destructive of the love of liberty, inimical to the true interest of South Africa, and likely to weaken the bond of union between the several portions of the Empire. 40

In the ranks of British labour, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain passed a resolution against Chinese labour comparing it to slavery. The Federation hoped the working classes of the country would repudiate it. The Labour Leader insisted the Chinamen were to be slaves. "After the waste of blood and treasure in the Transvaal, it is something more than humiliating to have to confess that the outcome is Chinamen for the mines, and out of work and starvation for the white men." The paper accused the government of handing the country over to the mining magnates who, with Milner's help, would see to it "that as few white men--with votes--are employed as possible." The paper also published an interview with R. L. Outhwaite, a former editor of the South African Guardian, who pointed out that the mining interest controlled the paper in the Transvaal. He could not see how working the mines with Chinese would increase the white workers. He thought the reverse would happen as he saw a need for only about one white man for

40 "Report of the Proceedings in Connection with the 26th Annual Meeting of the National Liberal Federation held at Manchester, May 12, 13, and 14th, 1904" in Liberal Party, Pamphlets and Leaflets, pp. 78-81.
every hundred Chinese. The only reason the Chinese were needed at all was to pull the "overextended capitalists out of the hole."\textsuperscript{41}

The Independent Labour Party, meeting in conference at Cardiff, would not accept the argument of economic necessity. It passed a resolution condemning the government. MacDonald, later Prime Minister for his party, set forth the reasons for rejection as follows:

The Transvaal Labour Ordinance is objectionable for the following reasons; (1) that in effect it amounted to slavery; (2) that it is an attempt on the part of South African Financiers to keep the white population in such economic control that the Progressive and Labour movement in industry and politics will be forever impossible; (3) that the rate of the exploitation of the country should be determined by the native and white labour available, because it is impossible to lay the industrial foundations of a community upon a class of men with no civil rights and no permanent connection with the country in which they work; (4) and that the ordinance, therefore, is a menace to settled South Africa, that as a result South Africa will be degraded and brutalized by the race enmities which always arise when different civilizations are mixed up together (as, for instance, the lynching morality of the United States), and that, therefore, the Ordinance is a menace to white civilization, and as the Labour Party considers that the last word upon such questions as slavery under our flag must always rest with the Home Government, because they affect the fundamental principles of British rule and include more than rights under colonial self-government, it will be in Parliament that the following steps should be taken: (a) the immediate suspension of further imports of indentured labourers; (b) the appointment of a competent Commission upon which labour shall be adequately represented to proceed to South Africa, and report to Parliament on labour conditions of the Transvaal; (c) the retransportation of the indentured workmen and the winding up of the operations of the ordinance.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{41}Guardian, February 25, 1904; Labour Leader, February 27, and May 13, 1904.

\textsuperscript{42}Labour Leader, April 9, 1904; Benjamin Sacks, J. Ramsey MacDonald in Thought and Action (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1952), p. 374; Guardian, April 15, 1904.
A great protest meeting with twelve speakers on twelve platforms was held in Hyde Park. The meeting under the auspices of the Labour Party brought out a crowd which the Times estimated at thirty thousand and the Guardian at eighty thousand. The resolution, which passed with a "tremendous shout," protested the action of the government and called upon the government to protest the colony from the capitalists and the Empire from degradation. 43

The Tories had to defend their policy before the nation. William St. John Broderick, the War Minister speaking in Manchester, said the first and foremost duty of the government was to bring prosperity back to the Transvaal. Since the mines contributed some seven-eighths of the revenue, they were the primary concern. Employment of yellow labour would solve the mines' problem and the Asiatics would not compete with white workers as they would be doing work which whites refused to do. 44

Did the Conservatives believe that Chinese labour would hurt them at the forthcoming election? Lyttelton, in a letter written by his secretary, admitted the decision would "probably, for the present, cost the Unionist Party the loss of many votes in the country." He considered that "a Government which flinched from doing what it knew to be necessary in the interests of another part of the Empire in order to avoid losing supporters at home, would not deserve, morally, to retain possession of power." 45

44 Times, February 29, 1904.
45 Times, March 19, 1904.
Joseph Chamberlain, the former Colonial Secretary, felt it necessary to explain his position on Chinese labour. He assumed the government was satisfied that conditions which he had laid down the previous year were fulfilled and that the white population of the Transvaal was now strongly in favor of Chinese labour. While he thought the Liberals opposed the policy for political purposes in England, he himself was not sure the Chinese would be an economic success. He thus protected himself before the working and more liberal sections of his constituency.

The Tories continued to justify their position through the journals of the day. There were many so-called first hand observers who, startled by the stoppage of the mines, declared the Chinese to be an economic necessity. Such Liberals as Herbert Samuel, on the other hand, used periodicals to attack the ordinance. He rejected the economic necessity argument pointing out that the large numbers of Chinese needed were so large there could be no question of their temporary use. He said that the conditions certainly approximated slavery.

Several minor matters had to be cleared up before the importation of Chinese would begin. First of all, Lyttelton wanted the

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46 Times, April 26, 1904.

proposed wage scale so he could compare it to the one for the Kaffirs. Milner replied that the scale was only one for a minimum wage as the Chinese were to work on a piece work basis. Those with experience in dealing with the Chinese felt they preferred the opportunity to earn more through more work. Though his minimum wage was less than the Kaffir wage, he felt that with experience the Chinese would be able to make more. Lyttelton protested that the Chinese should not get less than the Kaffirs. If the owners wanted to use piece work beyond an equal base pay, this was all right. The Chamber of Mines, through Milner, agreed to the equal base pay. Later on, Lyttelton admitted that he had allowed a lower base wage than he had promised Commons, as he followed Milner's piece work argument. If the Asiatics did not, however, earn as much as the natives within six months, the basic wage would be raised.

48

Finally, in May, 1904, with the signing of a Convention between China and Great Britain to import Chinese workers for the British Empire, another problem was solved. Though set up for South Africa, it had to be drawn up for the whole Empire. The Convention, while providing for the publication of the terms of employment, said the applicants had to register with both the English and Chinese authorities. They also had to submit to a physical examination to determine their fitness for rigorous labour. To safeguard the rights of the Chinese, provision

was made for the appointment of a Consul or Vice-Consul on the scene to watch over the interests and general welfare of the labourers. In addition, the labourers had to be repatriated to the port of embarkation upon completion of their contracts so that they would be no further from home than when they started. The labourers were not to be transferred from one mine to another without permission of the authorities as their contract was for a particular mine.49

In notifying Milner of the treaty signing, Lyttelton said that importation could not begin until he could be assured that there was no longer any danger from the plague, which had cropped up sporadically in China and also in Johannesburg. Milner replied that his medical advisers denied there was any danger. The men would be examined before leaving China, and would have a voyage of twenty-five days which would allow plenty of time for incubation of the disease. They would also be given another examination upon reaching South Africa.50

The Colonial Secretary left the decision to Milner:

In view of the opinion of your medical advisers I am not prepared to interfere with the action of the Transvaal Government in taking the responsibility of permitting the introduction of labourers from China and Hong Kong. . . . You are, therefore, at liberty to allow embarkation from


50 Exchange of telegrams between Milner and Lyttelton, May 13, 1904, in Cd. 2026, 1904, p. 51.
China and Hong Kong to take place as soon as you are satisfied that all necessary preliminary conditions have been complied with.  

The reaction to the possible start of recruiting was good in Peking where the Chinese believed shipments would begin almost immediately. They felt the terms were more liberal than anything ever before offered to the Chinese, promising great numbers would be willing to work in the mines. Johannesburg received the news more placidly as many believed that the benefits of the Chinese would not be felt for several months.  

The Regulations covering actual conditions and the governing of the Chinese were promulgated in the first part of June. These formalized the necessary details of actual administration including forms for the contract, wages, hours, and all necessary orders. With the promulgation of the Regulations all official actions had been completed and everything was ready for the first shipment. Hopefully, it was thought that provision had been made for every possible desire of the men and for the rights and safeguards of South African residents.

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51 Telegram from Lyttelton to Milner, May 18, 1904, in Cd. 2026, p. 52.
52 Times, May 14 and 16, 1904.
53 Times, June 14, 1904.
CHAPTER V

THE CHINESE LABOURER

The recruitment of Chinese labourers did not at first proceed as rapidly as many had hoped. In May, 1904, the first two ships sailed, but one had to be delayed for lack of recruits. By the middle of July the recruiting was going more smoothly. There were still occasional difficulties; the Viceroy of Canton raised technical objections about the place of embarkation and there were minor matters of registration, but the emigration agent for the mines early satisfied the Viceroy who withdrew his objections and issued an encouraging enlistment proclamation.¹

The first contingent of Chinese, sailing from Hong Kong on the steamer "Tweeddale," was expected to arrive at Durban on the 18th of June. Although the steamer could carry 1,500 men, only 1,060 were aboard, some forty percent of those who applied having been rejected as unfit. The second ship, which arrived in Durban on July 29, carried 1,907 men. Almost immediately, the Colonial Secretary was asked how many of the men had brought families with them; Lyttelton had to admit that none had although he thought some might do so later. Special accommodations had been prepared for those whose families would join them.²

¹Guardian, June 24, 1904; Times, July 11 and August 3, 1904.
²Times, May 27, June 9, and July 23, 1904.
The coolies landed in Durban and, after another physical examination, were put on trains for the Rand. The first train, carrying three hundred men, went straight to the New Comet mine, and since the men were detrained only a short distance from their compound, did not enter the city of Johannesburg. An eyewitness, Geoffrey Robinson, thought it very amusing after all the fuss "to see a train steam slowly across the Veld and disgorge 300 live pigtails." They seemed to be a "docile and phlegmatic people, settled down at once, in the rooms of the compound, hung their straw hats on pegs, unpacked their wicker baskets, and were very zealous about their work."^3

Each man received a zinc badge with his number printed upon it which was to serve as his official passport while in the Transvaal. The sleeping rooms to which they were assigned measured roughly thirty by fifteen feet. Each room was designed to hold twenty men who were to sleep in double decked wooden bunks. In a large dining room seating about five hundred, the men were fed meals consisting of fish or meat, fresh vegetables, rice, and tea. Hot baths were provided for each compound. The Chinese-speaking compound manager had come with the coolies from China. These facilities were enclosed into a compound which measured roughly 300 by 250 feet. The living conditions were further described by the Superintendent of Foreign Labour, Arthur Evans:

> Detailed plans of rooms, kitchens, latrines, and hospitals are submitted to me and to the Medical Officer of Health, Pretoria. I inspect the premises at intervals during

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erection, and my suggestions, if any, as to improvements in accommodation or ventilation are always attended to. The number of labourers accommodated in any compound is calculated according to the cubic capacity of the rooms, and a license to import issued accordingly. A stove with special ventilating chimney is erected in each room, and during the winter months an extra blanket is served out where necessary.4

Almost immediately Coolie efficiency was compared with that of the Kaffir. They were said to be giving "every satisfaction" and settling down to the routine. There were shirkers, but the majority were industrious men who had already proved themselves superior to experienced natives. Keen workers among them were requesting permission to work double shifts which, however, the employers refused.

No sooner had the men started to work than beri-beri broke out in the compounds. Milner reported forty cases on the first ship's arrival. These were immediately repatriated. Soon another twenty-five cases were reported at the mines and one death from heart failure. Those with beri-beri were isolated and termed likely to recover.

"Neither medical officers nor labourers themselves have the smallest anxiety about this outbreak," telegraphed Milner to Lyttelton, "and former express opinion that general health of this batch is surprisingly good."5

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Milner also claimed that the number of whites employed was increasing as more Chinese were imported. In the only mine using the new labourers, the number of whites increased from thirty-four to ninety-six. One hundred and forty-three whites were anticipated when the mine operated at full capacity. Without Orientals, jobs for the whites would have been reduced. The number of whites employed in the industry continued to climb until by the end of August there were more whites employed, 620 than ever in the some thirty years the mines had been operating.6

The President of the Chamber of Mines, Schumacher, pointed out that the "importation of every thousand coolies involved a capital expenditure of £25,000, which was sufficient proof of their belief in its success." He said that the Messrs. Eckstein, the owners of the New Comet mine who had received the first group of Coolies, were prepared to take the whole next complement. The number of Chinese imported in the first months was quite heavy and quite expensive; by the end of October 12,965 labourers had been imported. The owners feared intervention if a change in government occurred in England, but meanwhile it was hoped that the Transvaal would have 40,000 Asiatics by the end of the year. This number was not achieved, however, until June, 1905. Despite the fact the Chamber of Mines statistics showed the Chinese more efficient, the mine officials indicated that for financial reasons

they were willing to take all available blacks. Evidently, the hard working Chinese were proving more expensive than expected.\(^7\)

Later, Milner released the official statistics on the cost of the Chinese. For twelve months it was £16-11-3 while it only cost £5 for a Kaffir for the same period. The cost of food for the Chinese was double. The Governor thought this should stop the fiction that the Chinese were hired to replace available blacks. "Nobody can rate the commercial intelligence of the mine owners so low as to suppose they would incur this enormous trouble and expense if an adequate supply of Kaffir labour were ready to their hand," he commented: the Chinese were only being used to make up the difference between the available labour and the total need.\(^8\)

The Chinese themselves seemed quite happy as a group and respected their white overseers. Though some time will be spent with the problem individuals perhaps one illustration might be given first for those who were contented. When Mr. Strangman Hancock, the manager of Jumlers Deep Mine, left his job, the Chinese presented him a slab of gold. It was inscribed:

\begin{quote}
A Presentation to Honorable Big Man Mine Owner
We Chinese have been here nearly two years
We are well fed and cared for
The work is good and it suits us
And the pay is not small
The owner treats us as well as heaven and earth treat us
\end{quote}

\(^7\)\textit{Times}, July 22 and October 20 and 21, 1904; \textit{Guardian}, September 16, 1904.

\(^8\)Letter from Milner to Lyttelton, January 30, 1905 in Cd. 2401, 1905, pp. 68-69.
We have nothing suitable to present the owner for his kindness. We present this souvenir.
From all the Chinese of the Jumpers Deep
27th October, 1906.9

Clearly these men were not too unhappy.

Some Chinese labour was soon proving difficult to handle. When in the first month two were killed in an explosion in the New Comet mine, the night shift "mutinied" refusing to enter the mine. They attacked the local Chinese controller and tumult raged for over an hour. It was stopped only by bringing in the local police who arrested seventeen of the ringleaders.10

Not surprisingly, the question of Chinese desertions had meanwhile arisen. Though the mine owners had provided for Chinese creature comforts they had not attempted to fill their leisure hours. Boredom must have been a serious concern when one considers the relative small space in which they were confined, while a normal life for black and white workers went on a short distance away. Besides the boredom, some homesick coolies hoped to sneak back to China while others who were victims of professional gamblers fled for their lives. Finally, some Chinese left because they had legitimate grievances against either their Chinese overseers or the white management. Milner received word that deserters had been credited with a large amount of trouble. He was satisfied that there were only three men missing on July 7, 1904.

9 Cartwright, p. 182.
10 Times, July 23, 1904.
These first months also saw several other disturbances. Milner, attempting to reassure the Colonial Secretary, said that, newspaper accounts to the contrary, the disturbances had been minor. He saw no cause for alarm as these slight disturbances were sure to occur. He reminded the Secretary that there had been disturbances from time to time in the Kaffir compounds.\textsuperscript{11}

No sooner had these reassurances been given than more serious trouble broke out. At the Geduld mine the Chinese rioted and assaulted a mine manager. At another mine, riots resulted in the death of three Chinese overseers. The Colonial Secretary asked Milner what penalties and under what laws the offenders had been convicted. Milner replied that thirty-nine Chinese had been charged with public violence and/or assault with the intent to do bodily harm, the latter charge against those who attacked their white manager. On the first charge, each was sentenced to four months imprisonment with hard labour. On the second, five were sentenced to two months hard labour and given a whipping of twenty strokes. Although both were common law offenses, the whipping was imposed as a result of a special ordinance regulating the work of the Chinese.\textsuperscript{12}

Relations between the Chinese and their co-workers remained unsettled. In December, 1904, in a major disturbance, Chinese attacked

\textsuperscript{11} Telegrams from Milner to Lyttelton, July 29, 1904 in Headlam, p. 485; October 22, 1904, in Cd. 2401, 1905, p. 39; Campbell, Chinese Emigration, p. 188.

\textsuperscript{12} Exchange of Telegrams between Lyttelton and Milner, November 25 and December 6, 1904, in Cd. 2401, 1905, pp. 40-41.
black workers at a mine near Germiston, and three Kaffirs and one Chinaman were killed while eight Kaffirs and twenty-five Asiatics were injured. It started when a Chinaman trespassed into a Kaffir compound containing women. When the Kaffirs maltreated him, he called his comrades for assistance. Though it took the coolies three tries to escape from their compound in the face of police resistance, they finally managed to break loose and burn the native location. The civil police were forced to maintain a guard around the Chinese for some days.  

It was becoming obvious that it was no longer possible to treat such conflicts lightly. According to the Johannesburg correspondent for the Daily Chronicle:

The Government makes no sign, but the safety of the white population along the reef when 50,000 Chinese are here is causing grave anxiety. . . . The only substantial assurance against a future holocaust of lives and the outrage of white women is the establishment of a strong force of special police along the fifty miles of reefs at the companies cost.

He went on to say that white miners were attacked and some residents felt secure only if they were armed.  

Defending the mine owners and the Chinese, the new President of the Chamber, Harold Strange, pointed out that Johannesburg had always been a rough city. He thought the disturbances were nothing new and were made more of than was fair to the industry. "We shall take the matter seriously," he promised, "and shall do our best to remove every possible cause of disturbance just as we do with the Kaffirs."  

13 Guardian, December 13, 1904.
14 Ibid.
15 Guardian, December 16, 1904.
Attempts were made to explain the disturbances. The Chinese Government sent a Consul to South Africa, as provided in the treaty, who found the general conditions at the mines good. He felt the illiterate Chinese rioted because they did not understand their contracts. Sir Arthur Lawley, again Acting Governor in Milner's absence, thought the problem was due "very largely to the fact that we have not had enough inspectors familiar with their (the Chinese) methods..." He arranged for additional inspectors hoping this would stop the outbreaks, or at least make them less frequent.16

In attempting to allay suspicion that the celibate Chinese community was responsible for the outbreaks, the President of the Chamber of Mines, at its March, 1905 monthly meeting, addressed himself to the problem of the Chinese womenfolk. The President said that a canvass of the twenty-seven mines then employing Chinese had been taken to learn how many would like to have their wives join them at company expense, but only one Chinaman was interested. A few others asked for time to consider and perhaps could give an answer in a year.17 One might well imagine that the representative of the owners would not present such a proposition in a way he thought would add to the labour costs.

Despite protestations that the matter was solved, the disturbances continued. On July 1, 1905, the Chinese in another mine, the Croesus, rose in rebellion, attacking the white living quarters. The


17 *Times*, March 17, 1905.
whites fled, but one was killed and several were injured before mounted police restored order. The blame was placed upon a Chinese-speaking white. He had been the compound manager, but his contract had been terminated the day of the riot. Motivated by spite, he aroused the Chinese. Although arrested and charged with inciting a riot, later changed to a charge of murder because of the death, the man was finally acquitted. It was suggested by the court that the riot would not have occurred if the Chinese had been properly handled.\textsuperscript{18}

The British people often received a much more startling version of the cause of the riots. One man sent this description of torture by a Chinese policeman to the editor of the \textit{Labour Leader}:

\begin{quote}
Here they are stretched on the floor, their buttocks bared, and then the brutal game of fifty up commences. . . . But even this does not finish their ordeal. They are then tied up by their pigtails to nails driven in the building uprights, their toes just touching the ground, and their arms securely handcuffed around the posts. A maddening form of tormentation [sic] now begins. Every Chinese policeman who comes along has a "go" at these poor helpless creatures bashing them in the face with the soles of their boots, or any other weapons that may be near at hand. These and other unprintable acts of torture and degradation I have witnessed with my own eyes.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

No sooner had this description been published than another riot broke out, this time at the Rose Deep mine. It resulted from a quarrel between a coolie and a Chinese policeman. After an attempt to lynch the Chinese policeman was stopped by an outside police force, the men promised to go back to work if he were dismissed. The Government Superintendent of Foreign Labour promised that justice would be done. The rioting

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Times}, July 3, 1905.
\textsuperscript{19}Letter from LRC in \textit{Labour Leader}, June 16, 1905.
continued, however, and it was some time before the local police could enter the compound. Another mine disturbance occurred at the Witwatersrand Deep mine when the Chinese entered the Kaffir compound. The police fired at the Asiatics to force them to return to their compound, injuring two Chinese in the legs. The Chinese Consul in Johannesburg charged that the mine manager caused the latter disturbance when he imprisoned two Chinese who wished to present a petition to the Consul alleging harsh treatment by the mine manager.20

In the midst of these troubles, the question of Lord Milner's tenure of office came up again. As early as October, 1904, it had been rumored that the Governor wanted to retire, but this had been officially denied. By the first of the year, however, it was common knowledge that he would step down and the question of his successor claimed both public and the government's attention. The government finally settled on Lord Selborne, who had served the Conservative cause in several minor offices and had been a party stalwart in the Lords. The Times happily assessed his qualifications. In the accompanying eulogy of Milner and his work in South Africa, it is interesting to note that the paper remained silent in regard to Chinese labour. It evidently was not yet willing to claim this an unquestioned success. Milner himself approved of Selborne in a letter to the Prime Minister: it was "the greatest possible relief" to him to know that Selborne was to be his successor.21

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20 Guardian, July 3 and 5, 1905 and June 17, 1905.

A deputation of the Miners Association, the labour group which had consistently opposed the Chinese, waited upon the new Governor, Selborne, upon his arrival in Johannesburg to urge more protection for white miners. The chief trouble appeared to be in the use of foul language by the Chinese reflecting upon white women. The group also alleged the Chinese worked only when forced to do so. It felt that a Kaffir should always be sent down with the white boss, as the black would always assist the white against the Chinese. Selborne, suspicious of the bad language charge, said that Chinese must have learned such language from the miners. Since there were only 20 cases of assault upon the white miners with some 40,000 Chinese in the mines, he could not believe matters could be as bad as reported. He called upon the whites to set a good example, saying that they should exercise patience in their dealings with the Chinese.²²

Shortly after taking office, Selborne sent a telegram to the Colonial Office outlining new steps. He asked approval for lockups in each compound to keep untried prisoners for twenty-four hours until an Inspector or the Superintendent of Foreign Labour arrived to try the cases. He suggested that these men be given the full powers of a Resident Magistrate but nothing further. Assured that this procedure was acceptable to all concerned, Lyttelton concurred in all that was proposed.²³

²²Times, July 3, 1905; Guardian, July 3, 1905.

In a personal letter to Milner, Selborne assessed the situation:

... I have had a great deal of trouble with the Chinese lately entirely arising from three causes. The first and principal is the misbehavior of the white miners knocking them about. Secondly, the totally inadequate provision of Chinese-speaking officials to act as intermediaries between the Chinese and the management or government which was heightened by the permission Evans gave to the mine managers to inflict corporal punishment on the Chinese. . . .

A major crime occurred when a Chinese trader operating a store outside a compound was murdered when he tried to resist a raid upon his store by Chinese workers. After this incident General Botha led a Boer delegation to Selborne to point out the great uneasiness which the outbreaks of violence and the Chinese desertions were causing amongst the white population. The Governor answered the delegation by outlining further steps to be taken for their protection. First, any white would have the power of arrest over any Chinese deserter. Secondly, whites residing in or near the Witwatersrand would be able to possess rifles again, though not magazine models. Further, if any man did not have a weapon or means to purchase one, the Government would lend him one.

This admission, that the Chinese were beyond ordinary methods of law enforcement and control, forced the government to rearm the Boers. No longer could anyone call the outbreaks mere rumor.

Botha's written protest to Acting-Governor Lawley was more forceful than his delegation. The Boer leader demanded protection from

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24 Letter from Selborne to Milner of August 8, 1905 in Wrench, Milner, p. 258.

25 Times, August 29 and 31, 1905.
the government, not promises. He hoped that any additional expense, which might be incurred in providing a larger police force, would be borne by those who had brought in the Asiatics. The owners should also be charged for any damages caused by rampaging labourers. Regarding the presence of the Chinese in the country as a cause of anxiety and danger, he stated that the only way, outside of repatriation, to alleviate this feeling of insecurity would be to institute some type of government compound. This would, however, resemble forced labour too much to be acceptable to the Boers. Botha summed up the Boer feelings: "the only effective way to put an end to this evil was to send the Chinese back to their native country."\(^{26}\)

Other outrages added force to this demand. In one instance the Chinese attacked an Indian hut, hacking the inmates with knives, disembowelling one and injuring three others. The police arrested some twenty Chinese and charged them with the crime. Another group of Chinese attacked a homestead at Klipfontein breaking windows, smashing doors, and ransacking the house. Though they did not molest the inhabitants, the Chinese stole £150 and attempted to burn the house. Then worst of all, a Chinaman was sentenced to six months and fifteen lashes for indecent assault upon a white woman, the first sentence for this type of an offense. The dread fear of the whites had become a reality with the outrage upon white women by the womenless Chinese.\(^{27}\)

\(^{26}\) Enclosure in a letter from Selborne to Lyttelton, September 11, 1905, in Cd. 2786, 1905, pp. 18-19; Campbell, Chinese Emigration, pp. 198-199.

\(^{27}\) Times, September 4, 13, and 16, 1905.
Answering Lyttelton's request for information of what steps were being taken to stop this sort of thing, Selborne suggested that amendments be made to the Labour Ordinance incorporating the promises he outlined to the Boer delegation. He said that the government had also brought in two hundred and seventy-five additional Constabulary to station around the Rand. These men were to be quartered at intervals of no more than five miles, and were to maintain constant patrols throughout the area. In three weeks, they had captured some two hundred and forty-three wandering Chinese.28

Despite the fact that such precautions were necessary and the people feared for their lives, Selborne defended the system in a long letter to the Colonial Secretary:

The conclusion is very much what might have been anticipated [he wrote.] Out of 45,000 human beings there is a certain admixture of bad characters; there is the usual proportion of men who do not intend to do anymore work in life than they can avoid; there is the usual proportion of keen, intelligent, hardworking men who are making the most of their opportunities and do well; there are those who like life and those who dislike it; and there is the great central body, who seem satisfied with their surroundings, who are perfectly contented to do a fair average amount of work, and who give no trouble.29

Ultimately new regulations were drawn up which provided for the immediate repatriation of those Chinese considered undesirable by the government. Some sixty-five Chinese were arrested, including one described as a

28Exchange of Telegrams between Lyttelton and Selborne, September 16 and 18, 1905, in Cd. 2786, 1905, pp. 8-10.

29September 18, 1905 in Cd. 2786, 1905, p. 29.
professional robber under the new law. These men were described as the nucleus of a band of 450 coolies of bad character.\textsuperscript{30}

Regardless of all governmental attempts to control the situation, the disturbances and desertions would continue until the Chinese were ultimately all repatriated and add to the Liberal accusations against the government for its "ill-conceived" policy. Despite the fact that these incidents only involved a very small percentage of the total number of Chinese in the Transvaal, every new disturbance served to sustain the controversy. In spite of any economic advantage which the Chinese might bring to South Africa, the violent actions of a small minority renewed the demands for their return to China.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Guardian}, October 19, 1905.
By the fall of 1905, a tired and discredited Tory Government waited for its inevitable ouster. Their large majority in the 1900 election and the prestige of the party had both withered away in the intervening years. The resurgent Liberal party had many whips with which to beat the government; the education act of 1902, the tariff question, the licensing act, parliamentary tactics, and the question of Chinese labour. The latter had been brought more forcibly to the attention of the British people because of the violence which the Chinese had brought to South Africa.

The Liberals continued pressuring the Tory Government throughout the 1905 Parliamentary session on the Chinese labour issue. Before the session began in January, 1905, Macnamara, the radical Liberal, said the rank and file of the party wanted the importation of indentured Chinese labour to cease, at least until the establishment of genuine home rule for South Africa which could then decide the issue for itself. He was confident that if this course of action were followed there would be no more coolies indentured; though he conceded those already in South Africa would probably have to work out their terms of service.¹

¹Times, January 13 and 14, 1905.
This type of criticism so irritated some Conservatives that one, J. I. Wanklyn, M.P., even offered a bet to C. B. He would give £500 to the Liberal Party for its own purpose if the next British Government revoked the Chinese Labour Ordinance, provided Sir Henry would give him £500 if it were not revoked. There was no use, he said, "mincing matters, and he wanted to pin Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman to a challenge he would not refuse."

When the Parliamentary session opened in February, Macnamara on behalf of the Liberals moved an Amendment to the Address from the Throne:

But humbly represent to your majesty that the facts now made known in respect to the importation of indentured Chinese coolies into Transvaal show that your Majesty's Government gave during the discussion of the Transvaal Labour Ordinance in this House assurances which have not been fulfilled; and represent further that this house expresses its regret that nearly a year has elapsed since the promulgation of the Ordinance without securing the opinion of the people of the Transvaal on the question of the policy of the Ordinance, especially since the opinion of the British Colonies generally, so far as officially expressed, appears to be vigorously opposed to that policy.

The debate on this motion produced virtually no new points of view and was defeated by the usual margin of some sixty votes. Its importance lies only in the demonstration of the continued pressure which the Liberals maintained upon the Government.

In autumn when the Chinese violence in South Africa had become more common, the Liberals had fresh fuel for their attack. The Liberal Magazine quoted an article from the Johannesburg Star describing conditions on the Rand. It termed the district "literally infested with

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2 Ibid., February 9, 1905.

3 Debates (Commons), CXLI, 490, February 17, 1905.
small parties of Chinese deserters." It even suggested that the farmers might take matters violently into their own hands if a solution were not found. The article pointed out that the Chamber of Commerce for the Rand had appealed to the government for more protection. Though by the time the article appeared in England the protection had already been granted, the Liberals still used the material to goad the Conservatives.

In a political speech in Manchester, Winston Churchill called the differences between the parties on the South African labour problem unbridgeable. He had consistently voted against the labour proposals simply because he thought them to be a "cold-blooded and a rather sordid experiment." Experience had shown that Chinese labour's rejection by the working men of the nation and the colonies of the South Pacific was correct. Calling the consequences worse than anyone could have foreseen, Churchill vividly portrayed the existing situation dragging out every horror:

First of all we may discern a cordon of police armed with rifles, loaded, in pickets every few hundred yards, supported by an imposing column of mounted men who can gallop instantly to any threatened spot. Inside this cordon are herded unnaturally together a number of men, burrowing for gold, ill-used by the white miners with whom they work, flogged by their overseers, in flat defiance of the law, when they do not burrow fast enough. Outside the cordon of police are the deserters, the men whom even the luxuries of a Johannesburg compound could not keep in content, roaming over the vast plain, crouching among the rocks, hunted like wild beasts, shot at sight, living by murder and rapine, the terror of the world, half a world between them.

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and their own sunny China. Surely the grimmest spectacle of moral havoc for which this Christian and civilized nation had been made responsible within the lifetime of living men.5

Sir Edward Grey, the future Foreign Minister, speaking in the same city a few days later, believed those who called a Liberal Government dangerous because it would halt the importation of Chinese into the Transvaal were correct. "These things," he said optimistically, "were perfectly true of the next Liberal Government."6

The Colonial Secretary, Lyttelton, continued trying to justify the government's position by absolving the Imperial Government of responsibility for the Chinese. It had not imposed Asiatics upon the Transvaal. The Colony had passed the enabling Legislation in its own Legislative Council. The importation law had been good because it had increased white labour in the country. In regard to the number of desertions, he told a Leamington audience that there were only 275 deserters out of 54,000 and 125 of these had been caught.7

The Guardian attacked the Colonial Secretary's position, reminding the British people that neither the Legislative Council nor the Labour Commission had been chosen by the white persons of the Transvaal, nor did they represent the interests of these same people. The government had consistently refused to allow inhabitants of the Transvaal to vote on the question, thereby betraying its own realization of the inherent hostility of the country toward the Chinese.8

5Times, October 11, 1905.
6Ibid., October 15, 1905.
7Ibid., November 3, 1905.
8November 3, 1905.
Though many Liberals, including the future Prime Minister, charged the Tories with preaching a war for white supremacy and then allowing fifty thousand Chinese into South Africa, others did not. As the end of the Tory Government drew near, there were those such as Asquith who saw tariff reform as the major weapon with which to attack the Conservatives and confined themselves to this issue.9

Despite rumors, which from time to time had become most insistent, the government had continuously denied that any flogging of Chinamen had taken place during their stay in South Africa. Lord Selborne, however, in a telegram to Lyttelton admitted the flogging but said that the average number of coolies flogged daily on the Witwatersrand mines was not forty-two, as had been asserted, but only a third of that number. Lyttelton submitted this correspondence to the cabinet in a minute.10 Yet the damage was done. Balfour realized the seriousness of the situation and was irritated with Milner for having tolerated this inhuman punishment while keeping knowledge of it from the government. 11

At this point the tottering Balfour Government, defeated upon a minor matter, decided upon the tactical move of resigning rather than dissolving the Commons. Balfour felt the Liberal party was so split


11 Gollin, Milner, pp. 70-71.
that it could not take office. He underestimated Campbell-Bannerman, who upon receiving assurances of Tory cooperation until an election could be called, assumed the reins of office. C.B. kissed hands on the fifth of December, 1905, with his party united behind him except for Rosebery.  

The party which had spent so much of its time while in opposition criticizing the use of Chinese labour suddenly found itself responsible for the administration of the policy. It was offered plenty of advice. The *Times* suggested the Chinese were doing well in the Transvaal: had not Selborne reported that only a small number of Chinese were convicted of crimes and had not production increased? It saw no reason to stop Chinese labour unless "of course, the Transvaal under responsible Government so desired." The *Guardian*, while hoping the government would not come into conflict with the permanent civil servants, thought that "no regard for persons can outweigh the importance of eliminating the essence of slavery from this system and preserving South Africa as a white man's country."  

The new Cabinet discussed a memorandum presented to it by Lord Elgin, the new Colonial Secretary. The paper examined the state of conditions of the Chinese in the mines and a summary of all positions which had been presented. Lord Selborne's latest statements to the new government were included in which he claimed the system was not wicked.

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13 *Times*, December 8, 1905; *Guardian*, December 8, 1905.
He even offered to submit to a Royal Investigating Commission if he were not believed. Although no decision was recommended, the general tenor of the paper was to accept the Tory decision to leave matters in the hands of the Transvaal.\(^{14}\) After this discussion, Lord Elgin announced the decision to end the importation. The telegraphic order to Selborne said, "His Majesty's Government consider that the experiment of the introduction of Chinese labour should not be extended further until His Majesty's Government can learn through an elected and really representative Legislature the opinion of the Colony, and the Cabinet has accordingly decided that the recruitment, embarkation, and importation of Chinese coolies shall be arrested, pending decisions as to grant of Responsible Government." Elgin asked Selborne, as Governor of the Transvaal, to consult his law officers about the possibility of revoking the 15,000 licenses which had been granted by the previous government but not yet filled.\(^{15}\)

Selborne protested the new course of action. He wrote a long letter to Elgin reporting the country's economic situation, pointing out that it had long been accepted that local labour was not sufficient for the needs of the country unless the Kaffirs were forced to work. The real question was "whether the Transvaal [was] to be condemned to forego its potential development through lack of an available labour supply." He claimed not to see any distinction between importing labour


from Portuguese portions of Africa and importing labour from China. After alluding to the country's dependence upon the gold mines he warned, "I do not attempt to depict the economic or political consequences to South Africa of so grave an industrial and financial crisis as that which would surely arise under the circumstances supposed." He believed that if the licenses already granted were allowed, there would be plenty of time for a new Transvaal legislature to decide its own policy. If, on the other hand, the licenses were revoked, he feared a very strong outburst of popular opinion. 16 The king, agreeing with Lord Selborne, foresaw grave consequences in the end of Chinese labour. He regretted that the policy had been reversed after the Liberals had had "so short an experience of office. . . ."17

Resentment against the government's action took two forms in the Transvaal. First, the probable effect upon the economy of the nation was discussed. These attitudes ranged from the feeling that the industry was not unduly upset to the attitude of Geoffrey Robinson, now a journalist in the Transvaal: "We are not fussing yet about Chinese labour, but the feeling is strong and difficult to restrain. What those idiots won't see is that to paralyse the mining industry is not to ruin the 'Randlords' who could all retire rich men, whatever happened, but to ruin the white miners, professional men, traders, etc., and


generally to eliminate the British population of South Africa. Other writers felt that more serious results would stem from the revival of mistrust and hostility which had been apparent against previous Liberal Governments. The Transvaal Leader felt that this unwarranted interference in the Transvaal's affairs could be a spark to set off a new Revolution comparable to the spark for the American Revolution.

Elgin, after consultation with the Cabinet, finally reached an agreement on the matter of the some 15,000 unfulfilled licenses. The opinion of the government's legal advisers, including Asquith, a brilliant lawyer and now Chancellor of the Exchequer, Elgin reported, coincided with the lawyers of the Transvaal; the contracts had to be fulfilled. Blame for them must lie with the Conservatives who had allowed them; in short, the Liberals could not be held responsible for what had been done before they took office. Nothing would be done to increase the large number of Chinese already in the Transvaal, until the country had an opportunity to express its opinion through a freely elected and really representative legislature.

Elgin, after consultation with the Cabinet, asked Selborne for his comments of a proposed new policy which would involve some sort of

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18 Wrench, Dawson, p. 49.
19 Times, December 23 and 28, 1905.
governmental aid for Chinese labourers who might want to quit their contract and return to China, but did not have the necessary financial resources to do so. He suggested that the Governor might draw up some regulations to implement a project of this sort.\textsuperscript{21}

While this search for a new policy went on, the campaign for the coming election occupied more and more of the party leaders' time in England. Some Conservatives felt they might be hurt because of Chinese labour. Joseph Chamberlain, though he termed the cessation of Chinese importation interference in a self-governing colony, tried to absolve himself of responsibility for the Chinese. The introduction of the Chinese took place after he had left office. He was, therefore, "not personally responsible for that policy in the slightest degree."\textsuperscript{22} Lyttelton already had noted that the policy could hurt the Conservatives.

Balfour felt that he must defend this policy of his government. He, therefore, devoted most of a major speech at Leamington to a defense in which he touched on all the old reasons for the use of Chinese labour. He accused the Liberals of hypocrisy in their use of Chinese labour as an election issue. Later speaking in East Manchester he asked:

\begin{quote}
What hypocrisy is this? If I thought that we were really staining the great anti-slavery traditions of this country, do you suppose that I would for a moment remain a member of a Government who intended indirectly to perpetuate it?
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., January 6, 1905, in Cd. 2519, 1906, p. 46; Great Britain, Cabinet Papers, 37/82 January 2, 1906.

\textsuperscript{22}Liberal Magazine, 13 (January, 1906), 721-722; Guardian, January 1, 1906.
That is what they mean to do. They have the power now . . . to put an end to the whole system. They do not mean to do it. They do not dare to do it, and what they mean to do is to ride off on the idea that they can throw the responsibility on somebody else, where, if it be slavery, they are the people, and the only people, who can prevent it.

He claimed the Liberals never intended to stop this so-called slavery because it was not slavery and because it would wreck the Transvaal; they only hoped to gain votes this way. Again in the same constituency, he asked that if the Asiatics were illegal in the Transvaal, why were they not illegal in Guiana where the Liberals had introduced such workers in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Turning to Liberal electioneering he observed, "Placards in the constituency on the subject of Chinese labour were a mendacious electioneering dodge unworthy of the respect of any honest politician."\(^{23}\)

The Liberals, on the other hand, continued to exploit their opportunity. Winston Churchill, the new Colonial Under Secretary, in a speech in what he hoped would be his new constituency, North West Manchester, said the Imperial Government had to rule until a definite Transvaal Government had been established. Under this assumption, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Elgin, had stopped the importation of Chinese. The new policy returned matters of Transvaal affairs to a truly representative assembly in the Colony. The government was submitting this policy to the country and "they were fully prepared to justify it at

the earliest possible moment." At Arbroath, Lord Morley attacked the Tories for accepting Chinese labour, terming it a sorry mess, particularly when it came after the Boer War. The war had been fought supposedly for glorious aims and the result had been the importation of Chinese. David Lloyd George aroused strong opposition when he attempted to speak in the Tory stronghold of Leamington. After being shouted down in a stormy meeting, he had to express his views in a meeting of the local Liberal Club. He wanted to publicly ask Lyttelton if he had known of the licenses which had been issued to such excess. If he did not, as he had claimed, then why was he Colonial Secretary? After all it was the duty of the Colonial Secretary to know what was going on in the Colonies.

Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the new Prime Minister, pointed out in Liverpool that the government wanted to stop Chinese labour completely. It was not possible, he reminded his audience, because contracts had been granted and these either had to be honored or purchased from the individuals who held them. He denied that the Liberals were using them simply for political gain and they would not reinstate the system after the election. He stated, "It was no part of the duty of the state to supply mine owners with cheap servile labour. There was plenty of labour in this country and plenty in South Africa at a price. . . . The present government would do everything that they could

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24 Ibid., January 5 and 7, 1906.
25 Ibid., January 12, 1906.
do legally and reasonably to rid our country of the stain left upon it by the villainous system which the late government introduced."26

When new outrages occurred in South Africa during the election campaign, the Guardian made sure that every horror was brought home to the British public. One such dispatch read:

Lying in the moonlight on the white sand they presented a sickening spectacle. The hands of one of the victims had been stripped of the flesh, and only the bare bones were showing, and the head of the other was attached to the body by but a shred of flesh, while, their eyes had been forced from their sockets.27

The Liberals also tried to appeal to the more reasonable of their followers by such means as an interview with Creswell, who remained the leader of the anti-Chinese movement. Though never moving from the belief that the Chinese should be sent home, he believed that the action should be taken by the Transvaal Government as the people of that country were tired of having decisions made for them. He said that the Chinese had been imported only because the mines were powerful enough to force a depression until the people would accept the Chinese. He was of the opinion that the slight increase in white labour which had taken place was in spite of the Chinese, not because of them.28

The first contested election in Ipswich began the great Liberal landslide. When the election returns were in, the Liberals had obtained 377 seats for a majority of 84 over all other parties combined,

27 January 8, 1906.
28 Ibid., January 12, 1906.
one of the largest majorities in modern times. Many of the Tory leaders had been defeated including Balfour, Broderick, and Lyttelton. A safe seat for Balfour would later be found in the City of London. The Tories only won 157 seats. The Irish held 83 seats while Labour, including the 23 Lib-Lab seats, had 53 seats in the new House. 29

In assessing the election, the Times concluded, "No single cry, perhaps, has proved more useful to the Liberals in their successful attack on their adversaries than that against Chinese labour." This was a cry to which no educated person would listen, but still the Liberals fed it to the masses. Chamberlain in his explanation of the Tory defeat said, "For every one seat that had been lost by fiscal reform, ten seats had been lost by this story of Chinese labour." 30 One must be cautious in accepting this judgment since the architect of fiscal reform would not want his program blamed for his party's failure. Still, there must be an element of truth in this conclusion. While Chinese labour perhaps did not play the dominant part in the defeat of the Tories, it certainly did play a significant part.


30 Times, January 17 and 19, 1906.
CHAPTER VII

THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S POLICY

As the great Liberal majority took its place in the House of Commons, there was every hope among its many supporters that Chinese labour was to end at last. However, while the Liberals had stopped the granting of import licenses, nothing could be done about those already issued unless the government wanted to buy them back or face court action for interfering with private contracts. This meant that importation was arrested, but that Chinese would continue to enter during the coming year. The advocates of Chinese labour could also rest fairly assured that the Asiatics under contract would be able to complete their contracts.

The Transvaal proponents of Chinese labour immediately attacked the changes. The Executive Committee of the Chamber of Mines met in mid-January, 1906 and sent a resumé of its meeting to Selborne for transmission to Lord Elgin. The memo said:

My committee note with satisfaction that His Majesty's Government have acknowledged the validity of licenses to import labourers already signed by His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor.

My committee, while agreeing that Chinese labour was permitted as a supplement to, and not as a substitute for, Kaffir labour, must respectfully decline to admit that the estimates of the labour requirements of the mining industry by Mr. A. Evans, the late superintendent for Foreign Labour Department, which were made up in February, 1904, are applicable at this date and they desire
to reaffirm the principle that the requirements of the industry as regards Chinese indentured labour must be dependent upon the expansion of the industry and on the amount of native labour from time to time available. They would point out in this connection, that since April 1st the native labour supply has very considerably decreased, and they cannot, in any way admit that the number of natives on the Rand before the war can be taken as the standard of the amount of unskilled labour required.

Continuing, the report stated that former Colonial Secretary Lyttelton's comment that it might be well for the mine owners themselves to stop the importation of Chinese labour within six months was only a personal opinion to which the owners could not agree. However, the government's decision to stop the importation would be loyally accepted by those connected with the mines though they did not agree with the decision. The Committee also felt that "in view of the serious effect on the industry which any prolongation of the present uncertainty as to the continuance of coolie importation will undoubtedly produce," the government should recognize "the extreme importance of taking without delay the steps necessary to enable the people of this Colony to settle this all important matter."^1

The Chamber of Mines also published a pamphlet on the effect of stopping Chinese labour. Figures were produced showing that one-third of the industry was dependent upon the Chinese. Furthermore, any stoppage would not, in the minds of the members of the Chamber, substantially increase Kaffir labour. Cessation of the Chinese importation

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^1 Letter from Selborne to Elgin, January 22, 1906 in Cd. 2819, 1906, pp. 103-104.
would stop some eleven million pounds worth of machinery, would curtail a local expenditure of some six and one-half million pounds, and would reduce the output of gold by forty percent. At the conclusion of this string of statistics, the Chamber admitted that all the figures used were only an estimate. ²

F. D. Chapline, the current President of the Chamber of Mines, trusted the Imperial Government would disassociate itself from the slander which had disgraced its party during the election. If the government were uneasy about the workers' conditions, he suggested that a Royal Commission be appointed to inquire into the charges. He promised that the Chamber would fully cooperate, as it had nothing to fear from a Commission composed of honorable men. ³

Some workers agreed that Chinese labour would hurt the Transvaal. The Johannesburg Chamber of Trade, a workmen's organization, said in a resolution to be sent to London that it was "absolutely convinced of the beneficial results accruing from the importation of Chinese indentured labour," and "viewed with alarm any possible restriction." White miners in some mines, notably at Glen Deep and Geldenhuis, held meetings to protest the government's action. They declared the importation of Chinese labour imperative to the welfare of the nation. ⁴

² Chamber of Mines, Memorandum by the Transvaal Chamber of Mines on the Effect of Arresting the Importation of Chinese Labour (Johannesburg, 1906), pp. 3-6

³ Guardian, January 19, 1906.

The Pretoria correspondent for the Tribune conducted an interview with General Botha regarding the recent government restriction. Concentrating on the outrages which had taken place, Botha said that Het Volk, the Boer Party, had received daily complaints of outrages upon the local populace by the wandering Chinese. He stated the mine owners had neither been successful in stopping the outrages nor in curbing their roaming Chinese labourers. Het Volk, the general continued, would make further strong representations as "an end must be made of the present most unsatisfactory state of affairs."\(^5\)

Turning to the hope for self-government, the Johannesburg correspondent of the Times claimed that the people of the Transvaal were losing patience with the slander of the mining community by the Liberals. He admitted, however, that the supposed threats of secession were "utterly untrue" and misrepresented the attitude of the British residents. Along this same line, the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce heartily approved leaving the fate of the Chinese in the hands of the projected Transvaal Legislature which they urged should be established as soon as possible. Meanwhile, there should be no interference in the present operation of the labour ordinance by the Imperial Government.\(^6\)

About the middle of February, Lord Elgin, disregarding the qualms of Selborne on the matter, announced a new government policy for those

\(^5\) Guardian, February 1, 1906.

\(^6\) Times, January 25, and February 7, 1906.
Chinese who might wish to return home even though their contracts were not fulfilled. In a telegram he said:

His Majesty's Government feel it their duty to secure, as far as possible, so long as any responsibility rests with them for the administration of the Labour Importation Ordinance, that no Chinese labourer who honestly and genuinely desires under Clause 14 to return permanently to his home shall be detained in the Transvaal against his will by reason merely of want of money. They think it right that where the desire of the labourer to be permanently repatriated can be proved to be genuine by reasonable length of notice or by such other test as full consideration of matter may show to be necessary, the expenditure that may be required should be met out of Imperial funds.7

As might be expected the Chamber of Mines objected. Its President reminded the public that the high cost of Chinese importation indicated that all possible means of gaining Kaffir labour had been exhausted. Repatriation proposals were "an unjustifiable interference with private contracts" which the owners would "oppose by every legal method."8

In the annual speech from the Throne the Imperial Government announced the cancellation of the Letters Patent for limited responsible government for the Transvaal which Lyttelton had proposed. New ones would be issued omitting the intermediate step between the status of Colony and the grant of full responsible government. In regard to the Chinese, repatriation would continue throughout this period.9

8 Times, February 23, 1906.
9 Debates (Commons), CLII, 22, February 19, 1906.
In defending the policy of providing money from the Imperial Treasury for repatriation, Campbell-Bannerman told the Commons that the Transvaal Government itself did not have the money to pay the bill. Imperial funds would mitigate the evils of the system which at the moment was impossible to end. He admitted in a reply to Joseph Chamberlain that the Chinese still had to reside in compounds.\(^1\)

From Liberal backbenchers came a demand for stronger action. Major Jack Seely saw in this new Commons the opportunity to state the case against Chinese labour freely, although he hoped with justice and moderation. He wanted Chinese labour immediately stopped. Rejecting the charge of Imperial dictation to a self-governing colony, he said the Imperial Government had dictated matters far less important. A Liberal backbencher called for an investigation into the additional licenses. Quoting Lyttelton on the need for a voluntary reduction of the number of Chinese imported, he felt these licenses must have been granted in defiance of the government. A. C. Morton, representing Sutherlandshire, charged that from the reports received in England there could be no question but that Chinese labour in the Transvaal was slavery. Another Liberal noted that the Tory disaster directly resulted from forcing Chinese labour through the House of Commons. He saw no misrepresentation on the part of the Liberals since the party had continuously opposed Chinese labour.\(^1\)

\(^{10}\) *Ibid.*, cols. 172-173.

The Tories used two arguments in the debate. First, W. L. Burdett-Coutts, representing Westminster, called the government majority not an English one, but rather a Chinese majority obtained by the grossest misrepresentation. He pointed secondly to the shortage of natives and the low dividends immediately after the war and claimed that the Chinese had averted disaster. A. Fell of Yarmouth, a Tory, who had visited South Africa and had inspected the conditions under which the Chinese lived, said that he had seen them enjoying themselves when off duty. He termed sending them home a mistake costing some four thousand white jobs.\(^{12}\)

Since he was not in Commons, the only way that Balfour could speak out on the controversy was to the voters of the City of London where he sought reelection. Looking at the general election he said, "In five-sixths of the constituencies the cry of Chinese slavery bulked larger than any of the other questions that were brought before them. Putting aside all interests of party," he said in reference to the election policies of the Liberals, "putting aside all the indignation which I think may not unnaturally fill the breasts in a public controversy, I say that every man whatever party he may belong to, ought to look with shame and regret on a proceeding which has not merely done an undeserved injury to our colonial fellow subjects, but which has lowered the character of England, in the eyes of the whole civilized world."\(^{13}\)

\(^{12}\)Ibid., cols. 223 and 278-279.

\(^{13}\)Times, February 21, 1906.
As an amendment to the address in the House of Commons, H. W. Forster for the Conservatives moved, "But we humbly regret that your Majesty's ministers should have brought the reputation of this country into contempt by describing the employment of Chinese indentured labour as slavery, whilst it is manifest from the tenor of your Majesty's gracious speech that they are contemplating no effectual method for bringing it to an end." It was most definitely not slavery; in fact, all evidence indicated that living and working conditions were quite good. The Liberals used the term "slavery" only as a means of gaining advantage in the election.  

Winston Churchill, the young Assistant Secretary of State for the Colonies, defended the government's position. He termed Chinese labour a drastic action taken without mandate from the people of England, or more important, from the people of the colony concerned. The government would not take quick harsh action because it would hurt the small man in the colony and not the major mine owners. A new Transvaal Parliament would decide once and for all against imported Chinese labour. Churchill, who had crossed over to the Liberals only some eighteen months before, then attacked his former colleagues for permitting the flogging of Chinese. The recent actions of his government had done a great deal, he thought, to remove the old causes of cruelty, and offered the Chinese a chance to leave if they so desired. He was not concerned about any breach of contract since the contract forced a person to give up his freedom and was, therefore, improper.

14Debates (Commons), CLII, 532-534, February 22, 1906.
15Ibid., cols. 557-561 and 568-571.
After another Tory complaint of electioneering by Lord Robert Cecil, the head of the Liberal Publications Department arose to defend his party and himself. Augustine Birrell said that his department had done nothing more than to put the truth before the public. At any rate, how could the Tory party possibly complain of electioneering tactics after the disgusting exhibition which it had staged in 1900? When debate resumed the next day, the government found it was not secure from attack by its own members. The more radical ones, represented by Thomas Macnamara, called upon the government to rid South Africa of the coolies immediately, or else see to it that "they stayed as free men." The government should not depend on the Chinese leaving through government assumption of their repatriation costs. It should be made perfectly clear that the opportunity to renew the contract remained closed. According to John Ward, a former trade union leader, "The working men did not care by what terms they were described, the conditions of the Chinese labourers in the Transvaal were slavery so far as they were concerned."

Asquith, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said there had been no promises to deport the Chinese en masse immediately. To simply open the doors of the compounds would institute a reign of terror. He felt that the Home Government remained financially responsible since it had

16 Ibid., cols. 588-591.
18 Ibid., cols. 649.
allowed the Chinese into the Transvaal without the permission of the people of the colony. The new government in the colony would be able to face the situation anew as soon as the Home Government ended the present Ordinance. If the Transvaal then decided to continue importation, it would have to do so under certain restrictions or the Home Government would not allow it.

Joseph Chamberlain reminded the House that many of his comrades had lost their seats by the cry of "Chinese slavery." Many voters in certain areas believed that this was the first step toward cheap labour competition at home. Those who would take advantage of the repatriation at government expense he warned, would simply have a holiday at home and then sign up for another term. The size of the Liberal Party majority foretold the vote. Despite the large majority against them, the Tories forced the division. The result was a majority of three hundred and twenty-five against them.

The Guardian cheered "the government's determination to root this degraded industrial growth out of South Africa and to respect every reasonable obligation of law or equity." Justice, the paper of the Social Democratic Federation, flailed the government for not stopping Chinese labour outright when it thundered, "Chinese slaves are Chinese slaves as much under a Liberal Government as under a Tory."

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19 Ibid., cols. 672-677.
20 Ibid., cols. 679-682 and 688-689.
21 Ibid., col. 694.
22 February 24, 1906; Justice, March 17, 1906.
The debate on Chinese labour then shifted to the other House where Milner defended his position: "I know that I bear a large share of the responsibility for the introduction of the Chinese. I am not going to apologize for it. I am firmly convinced that I was right." He went on to say that both the people of the Transvaal and the Chinese themselves realized that the Asiatics were there for only one purpose, to supplement the shortage of black labour in the mines. He admitted he was responsible for slight corporal punishment stressing that it was used only for acts of violence and disturbance. When he later felt this action wrong, he reversed his position.23

Other Tory Lords continued to defend the previous government's action. Halifax told the House that he had visited the compounds on his recent trip to South Africa. He found conditions quite different from the Liberal descriptions which he termed "misrepresentations passing all bonds of deceiving even in time of political election." Lansdowne, the Tory leader, claimed to be glad that the Liberal Government had not fully decided upon a course of action. He felt that if a mistake were made which would hurt the colony, it would be unfor-giveable. Caution was the keynote.24

The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Elgin, claimed that the Chinese issue was not used for electioneering. He admitted there had been some use of the term "slavery" which he realized was

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23*Debates* (Lords), CLII, 716-718, February 26, 1906.

inaccurate. In fact, he regretted the use of the word at all in describing the conditions of the Chinese in South Africa. When the debate resumed after a short recess, the Duke of Marlborough asked Elgin whether he would lay a paper before the House containing the legal opinions on stopping Chinese labour. The Colonial Secretary answered that opinion in England agreed with the Attorney-General of the Transvaal; that is, it would be a violation of a private contract to stop those contracts already in existence. This opinion did not refer to any further grant of new licenses.25 The discussion in the Lords was dropped without any formal action.

Critics of the government's action from both sides of Commons continued to embarrass the ministers. Sir G. Parker asked Churchill whether or not the government intended to discontinue the experiment at the expiration of the Ordinance unless the proposed new Transvaal Government would receive the Chinese as citizens. Churchill replied that the government was not concerned with citizenship, but rather with more elementary human rights. The Tories also asked for a Commission to investigate the Chinese question. Campbell-Bannerman, answering this question himself, said that he had no intention of asking for such a Commission.26

When the House debated the Colonial Office Monies vote, Major Jack Seely moved an amendment to reduce the vote to call attention to the use of British Consuls in China for the recruiting of Chinese

25Ibid., cols. 716-718 and Vol. 153, cols. 8-10, March 5, 1906.
26Debates (Commons), CLIII, 1263, March 14, 1906.
labour. He thought this use of government agencies contrary to a government policy should be stopped. He also called for an immediate end to Chinese labour so that no party in the Transvaal would find itself touched by the issue. Charles Dilke, another radical Liberal, formally seconded the motion.  

Churchill once again answering for the government said that the consul's duties were delegated to the recruiters. If the consuls resumed the duties and then did not approve men for the Transvaal, the Chinese Labour Ordinance would be a "dead letter. In effect, the stoppage was possible because the consul was the means by which the whole process worked. Turning to the Transvaal itself, he said the government would not hesitate to use its veto power if the projected government there passed an Ordinance which the Imperial Government felt threatened liberty and democracy. The difference he claimed between the wishes of the Transvaal and the Imperial Government over Chinese labour had been because the Transvaal did not like the Chinese and the Imperial Government did not like the measures which the colony instituted as precautions against the Asiatics. The wisest course the mine owners could adopt would be stop crying and use this energy to find a satisfactory substitute labour force.  

Balfour, now returned to the leadership of the Tories, holding the seat for the City of London, asked Churchill what would happen if the Chinese were sent to the Transvaal through agencies of the Chinese

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27 Debates, cols. 1270-1273.
28 Ibid., cols. 1275 and 1278-1279.
Government and signed the identical contract now used. The Assistant Colonial Secretary said it would be illegal. Balfour then pointed out the constitutional danger for the self-governing colonies of the Liberal intention to veto any legislation on this matter which the government did not like. He claimed this would be interference in their affairs. In the ensuing debate, Edward Grey, the Foreign Minister, answered a question by Balfour as to what would happen if the Chinese sent men without a contract to South Africa. He said they would be refused by the British Empire. He then denied there would be any "moral conflict" between the Transvaal and the Imperial Government once the colony had true responsible government. Chamberlain then reiterated the position which he had maintained since his days as Colonial Secretary, namely, that the colony should be free to make its own decisions. The motion was then, by leave, withdrawn. 29

With the admission by Milner that he authorized flogging as a means of punishment, the political situation in regard to Chinese labour took more and more of a personal nature; in particular, the identification by the radical members of Parliament of Milner as the Tory figure most responsible for the hated Chinese labour system and the desire on the part of these same members to punish Milner. The Tories reciprocated. They chose as their target the Assistant Secretary of State for the Colonies, Churchill, whose very insolent personality infuriated them, particularly as a result of his manner in changing parties. 30

29 Ibid., cols. 1290-1292 and 1296.
30 Gollin, Milner, pp. 81-84.
With the sides drawn and the House in the mood for a good scrap, word spread quickly that the radicals had given notice of a motion to condemn Milner. Chamberlain, on behalf of the Tories, tried to save Milner's reputation by presenting a Conservative motion ahead of the announced Liberal intentions. He moved that the House declined to proceed with business "without an assurance from His Majesty's Government that they will recommend the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire and report on the economic and moral effect of the system of indentured labour at present in operation in the Transvaal." The former Colonial Secretary said that to stop the Chinese would force many British out of the colony and lessen the influence of the British faction in the Transvaal. He felt that any possible abuses should be investigated by a Royal Commission though he predicted that the Transvaal would keep a modified form of Asiatic labour. He thought any changes should come before self-government so there would be no Constitutional issue.\(^{31}\)

Churchill reiterated the government's position, "... that His Majesty's Government remain of the opinion ... that no useful purpose would be served at this juncture by the appointment of such a Commission." Turning to the abuses, he did not see how the Conservatives could not accept the word of their own appointee and former Cabinet member, Lord Selborne, that there were abuses in the system.\(^{32}\)

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\(^{31}\) *Debates* (Commons), CLIV, 399 and 400-405, March 21, 1906.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., cols. 420-424.
The Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, stated that the government wasn't really interested in Chinese labour, but in the conditions under which the ordinance forced the Chinese to live. He claimed that the British people, particularly the Liberals, were guided by the principles of morality and sentiment. There would be no Commission, he restated, as no purpose would be served by its creation.33

After defeating Chamberlain's motion (378 to 110), the House was ready to examine the motion against Milner. William Byles, a radical Liberal who sat for Salford, moved "That this House expresses its disapproval of the conduct of Lord Milner as High Commissioner of South Africa and Governor of the Transvaal, in authorizing the flogging of Chinese labour in breach of the law, in violation of treaty obligations, and without the knowledge or sanction of His Majesty's Secretary of State for Colonies." Byles claimed that Milner had already disapproved of his own action and now Byles was asking Commons to also disapprove of this conduct. He was sorry that a government of his own party would not accept his motion. He did not really care as the world would know that Milner's action had been wrong.34

The seconder, Frederick Mackarness, saw great moral issue at stake because an officer of the government had violated the law. It was doubly wrong when this officer attempted to cover it up as Milner had. Since Milner by his own admission had condemned himself, the

33Ibid., cols. 454-458.
34Ibid., cols. 458, 464 and 466-468.
House was not asked to judge whether or not he was responsible, but only to pass judgment on an admitted fact. 35

Chamberlain asked why, for a single small incident, would Commons censure a "distinguished member of our great Civil Service." He regretted that Milner failed to notice the action which his subordinates took in this case. He denounced the still unpresented government amendment charging the Liberals with cowardliness. If the government thought Milner guilty, the ministers should say so and not pass an "empty resolution more dishonest than the motion." He termed this as an act not of strength but of weakness. 36

Churchill, rising to present the government's amendment, faced the dilemma of having to maintain radical support for the government and still not destroy one of the great Civil Servants of the era. Though he was in agreement with the feelings expressed in the motion he thought the procedure was wrong. After all, Milner had been Governor under another administration and another House. He did not believe it was proper for this House to censure him. Secondly, Milner had not been summoned to speak before the House or a Committee thereof and it was wrong to censure a man unheard. Lastly, he had worked hard, though not always in agreement with the present House, and now was retired without any government pay. The government was now strong and the strong could afford to be generous, particularly when the individual was no longer a major factor in current events. He, therefore, moved, "That this House

35Ibid., cols. 469-472.

36Ibid., cols. 475 and 480-482.
while recording its condemnation of the flogging of Chinese coolies in breach of the law desires in the interests of peace and conciliation in South Africa to refrain from passing censure on individuals." 37

Balfour attacked the amendment claiming that the only reason the government watered down the motion was because it was afraid of Milner's many friends in South Africa. The result was a foregone conclusion. Churchill's amendment passed by a vote of 355 to 125 and then was substituted as the main motion and also passed. 38

The debate over Milner and his actions passed to the House of Lords where his Tory friends held an overwhelming majority which could be depended upon to deliver a verdict uncritical of one of the members of their own House. Lord Halifax, a strong Tory supporter, moved "That this House desires to place on record its high appreciation of the service rendered by Lord Milner in South Africa to the Crown and to the Empire." Halifax said he brought up the motion to further British interests in South Africa. He termed Milner's authorization of the flogging only a minor error in a brilliant career which he carefully traced for the House. 39 Lord Ampthill, former Governor of Madras and Viceroy of India, seconding the motion said that the Commons action was apt to slow or stop the men running the Empire for fear of later reprisals. In failing to censure Milner, he thought the Lords would

37 Ibid., cols. 490-494 and 499.
38 Ibid., cols. 501-504, 506, and 511.
39 Ibid. (Lords), cols. 1400 and 1412-1421, March 28, 1906.
represent the nation instead of a political party. Halifax's motion, he claimed, allowed the Lords to represent a gracious and just nation.  

Elgin pointed out that the government did not want to discuss policy concerning South Africa and to discuss such a motion as this would necessitate a discussion of policy. He admitted that Milner had done much good work while Governor of the Transvaal. To avoid a discussion of policy, he moved an amendment similar to the one passed in Commons and then moved the previous question.  

The Archbishop of Canterbury said that though he was, in general, opposed to a vote of this nature, he felt the strong sentiment expressed in Commons left little choice. Lord Burghclere pointed out that the vote, if passed at all, should have been passed under the previous government when Milner retired. He thought a belated vote of praise was almost as bad as a belated vote of censure. For this reason, he agreed with Elgin's attempt and would support him.  

Lansdowne summed up the Tory position when he said that the Lords had as much right to express its own strong feeling as had the Commons. He stated, "this is Lord Milner's House, and we are determined that in this House he shall not be without the honour which is due him." Elgin's motion for the previous question was then defeated by a vote of 170 to 35 after which the Halifax motion was carried without a division.  

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40 Ibid., cols. 1427-1431.
41 Ibid., cols. 1432-1433.
42 Ibid., cols. 1440 and 1444-1447.
43 Ibid., cols. 1499-1500.
Although the censure of Milner in Commons stood, the Lords' expression of thanks further confused the situation. Milner had been used as the whipping boy for the Liberals in answer to the demands of the party radicals. The action of the two Houses, however, pointed out the intense disagreement between them and warned of the future struggles which would take place before the Lords finally accepted the fact that they could not openly defy the will of the Commons.44

The Times, always loyal to Milner, termed the Lords' action an "invaluable service" which made the Lords an important part of the machinery of government for the nation. The paper also took the lead in preparing a public address in appreciation of Milner's services which was presented to him with the signatures of more than 370,000 citizens in the fall of 1906.45 Justice attacked Milner as a capitalistic tool whom the paper had consistently opposed. While Milner was guilty of outrageous conduct in the flogging incident, Justice said, it was "a very small matter indeed compared with the incalculable ruin and devastation inflicted upon South Africa" by Milner's avowed policy. He should be censured not for this incident, but rather for his entire Imperialistic career.46

A number of articles appeared in various periodicals relating the Chinese issue to the type of government which the Transvaal should

44Gollin, Milner, pp. 98-100.
45Times, March 30 and May 25, 1906; Gollin, Milner, p. 96.
46March 24 and 31, 1906.
have under a new constitution. The Liberal side was presented in the Westminster Review when an anonymous author forecast that the landlords would make trouble before accepting the government's proposals which made it necessary to guarantee that the transient single male would not be able to outvote the permanent population of the country. 47

The Tory position was put forth in the Political Quarterly which called for an immediate constitution to end the uncertainty of the Chinese issue. Another Conservative article once again pointed out the dangers to white prestige if whites worked in the mines as manual labourers alongside the blacks. After an attack upon Liberal propagandizing during the election, the author claimed that if the Boers regained a voice through responsible government, the English supremacy in the colony would disappear. 48

The government was also criticized from the ranks of labour when Ramsay MacDonald in the Leicester Pioneer stated that the government had to muzzle the outspoken Churchill who in his attacks upon the Tories had done irreparable harm to the colonies. He then accused the government of following an indecisive policy on Chinese labour. He felt the Liberals should settle the future of the Chinese in the mines to quiet the uncertainty which the present policy created. 49


49 Quoted in Times, March 21, 1906.
The Liberal Government's Chinese labour policy was not the
decisive measure which the people had been led to believe would be the
case. The government had been forced to override some of its own party
members and their desire to condemn Milner; substituting instead a
watered down fence straddling motion which typified its position. The
government not only had to avoid an economic collapse in the Transvaal,
which might happen by withdrawing the Chinese too quickly, but to hold
their majority together. Accepting power, the government could no
longer simply condemn, but had to find a way to maintain prosperity in
the Transvaal while attempting to fulfill a campaign promise to rid
that colony of Chinese labour.
CHAPTER VIII

ENDING CHINESE LABOUR

Though the government stalled for some months, it was obvious that some decision would soon have to be reached when a number of the Chinese completed their contracts; whether they should be sent home or allowed to re-enlist for another three years. As has been seen, the Imperial Government was pressed to make this all important decision and not to saddle the proposed responsible Transvaal Government with it.

The government felt that it could quickly mitigate the unhappiness of some of the workers by implementing its policy to permit any dissatisfied worker to return home at government expense. When Churchill announced the posting of the repatriation notices, the Chamber of Mines decided to test the legality of placing them within the compounds. The Chamber applied to the Supreme Court of the Transvaal for an interdict to restrain the Government Superintendent of Foreign Labour from posting the notices. The Chamber stated that while it appreciated the moderate efforts of the Liberal government to phase out the Chinese, it must test this placing of the notices. The Court needed a day or two to reach its decision during which time the government agreed not to proceed with the notices. When the Court reached a decision in favor of the government, the owners agreed to comply and announced they did
not plan to appeal the decision.\textsuperscript{1} The coolies themselves did not appear to be excited, but rather were indifferent. After some two weeks only twelve men had applied for return passage.\textsuperscript{2}

Selborne wondered if the Chinese understood the offer. He, therefore, visited three mines where in each case the Chinese claimed to understand the offer. They were more comfortable and earned more than they would in China. The Governor promised the twelve who had signed up that they would be investigated to ascertain if they had served the minimum length of service and would, if qualified, be sent home immediately.\textsuperscript{3}

The radicals in the Imperial Parliament were sure that the number of Chinese desiring repatriation was so small because the wording of the government's offer was vague. Stephen Walsh, a Labour Party member from Ince Lancaster moved to reduce the Colonial Office money bill in order to obtain a full discussion of this matter. He claimed that the country wondered whether the government realized the "intense living gravity of the question of Chinese labour."\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}Telegram from Selborne to Elgin, May 7, 1906, in Cd. 3025, 1906, p. 54; Times, May 10, 1906.

\textsuperscript{2}Despatch from Selborne to Elgin, May 14, 1906, in Cd. 3025, pp. 106 and 110.

\textsuperscript{3}Telegram from Selborne to Elgin, May 28, 1906, in Cd. 3025, 1906, pp. 85-97.

\textsuperscript{4}Debates (Commons), CLVIII, 645-646, June 8, 1906.
Churchill defended the offer of repatriation admitting what the Tories had been saying all along:

... It is my duty to state to the House what I believe, that after what has occurred in connexion with this repatriation proclamation it is impossible to resist the conclusion that there is no general desire on the part of the coolies employed on the Witwatersrand to leave their work and to return to China.

He then tried to calm the radicals by pointing out that the owners' own enthusiasm for the Chinese had steadily decreased. The extra money they had to pay to protect the area and the sending of some Chinese home early hurt these men where they understood it best, in the pocket book. Ramsay MacDonald, the future Labour Party Prime Minister, stated his party's position when he said the country, as a whole, wanted more than the Liberals were willing to give. The nation, he claimed, wanted the immediate cessation of the Chinese experiment.

The Guardian refused to accept the possibility the Chinese did not want to leave the Transvaal. It followed up an earlier questioning of the accuracy of the translation with an English literal translation of the Chinese wording of the document. This translation showed a flowery Chinese which, when translated literally back into English, led to certain vague wordings. The paper, of course, printed this translation with the original English document. Claiming that its hesitations about the accuracy of translation had been right, the paper asked the

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5 Ibid., cols. 660-665.
6 Ibid., col. 669.
government if this badly worded document was any way for a government
elected, "partly at least," on the Chinese question to act.  

Following the Guardian's revelation, over one hundred radical
M.P.'s waited upon the Prime Minister to request a day on the Parlia-
mentary agenda for the discussion of the South African labour problem.
Campbell-Bannerman promised a day for this discussion. He also stated
if life and property in South Africa were endangered by the Chinese, he
would not allow the last eight thousand Chinese into the Transvaal.
The Guardian cheered this opportunity to discuss these affairs. If
the government was determined to allow the Transvaal to decide the
future of the Chinese, Parliament needed, the paper felt, to make sure
that the real voice of the Transvaal was heard.  

Lord Selborne entered the translation discussion when Elgin
asked him if he were satisfied that the contents of the document were
known to the Chinese. Elgin pointed out that there were questions in
England as to a possible difference in dialect or poor wording which
might leave many Chinese unaware of the government's offer. Selborne
replied that the Transvaal Superintendent of Foreign Labour was sure the
notice had been understood. The number of applicants had increased to
fifty-seven of whom a number were illiterate. If the repatriation
notice had been understood by these men, it should be understood by
anyone. He concluded that "care had been taken to employ only ordinary

7 June 15, 1906.
8 Ibid., June 20, 1906.
phraseology which would have been easily understood by the average coolie."

Faced with this controversy, the government published a report from a Chinese language expert, E. C. Wilson of His Majesty's Consular Service in China. When he compared the official translation and the Guardian's version, he found that both conveyed the general idea. He felt that "the official translation [was] essentially correct and [conveyed] the spirit of the Chinese text." Despite this opinion, the government was willing to placate its critics. Churchill announced a new proclamation for government assisted repatriation to clear up any misunderstanding. As if it mattered a great deal, the Guardian quickly announced its approval of this version.

Opposition to the government's policy came both from the radicals who wanted immediate cessation despite any complications and from those who wanted to keep the Chinese. The Guardian continued to attack a government composed of men whom it had helped to elect. Asking for immediate action the paper said, "Even at this late hour the best policy of the Government would, we think, be to retrace its steps and announce that it [would] take on itself the responsibility of getting rid of the Chinese and present[ing] the Transvaal democracy with a clean slate to write upon."

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10 Appendix I, Cd. 3025, 1906, pp. 144 ff.
12 Ibid., July 28, 1906.
An article in MacMillan's Magazine claimed to examine the Chinese labour problem from the viewpoint of a South African resident. The author reminded the British people that the Colony's expansion depended upon the labour supply and pointed out that the importation of Chinese had freed a corresponding number of Kaffirs to work in other labour fields. Consequently, withdrawal of the Chinese would dislocate the entire labour supply. The gigantic struggle for Kaffir labour would, he felt, ruin the black from over-attention. Furthermore, he stated that the present governmental indecision already had put men out of work in Johannesburg.¹³

When the issue of Chinese labour was raised during debate on supply, Churchill used the occasion to note changes in the situation. He presented the new constitution for the Transvaal and at the same time stated that the Robinson group of mines had surrendered three thousand unused licenses in return for which they were allowed to establish and run their own native labour recruiting organization. He also stated that the Chinese consuls would completely reassume their powers and thus recruiting would cease. He "earnestly trusted" that no British Government would renew it.¹⁴

The Constitution which Churchill presented contained a Chinese clause which said that after the promulgation of the Letters Patent, no license should be issued for importing labour under the Labour

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¹⁴Debates (Commons), CLXII, 748-749, July 31, 1906.
Importation Ordinance of 1904. In addition, no contract made under this Ordinance should be renewed. One year after the first meeting of the new Transvaal Legislature, the Ordinance and all its amendments were to be ended. The legislature could hasten the end if it so desired. Though no actual date had been set for The Letters Patent, the end of Chinese labour was now in sight.

This measure did not unequivocally send the Chinese home as many had hoped. All it did was to make it easier for the Transvaal Government to prepare its own scheme. Though the old law was to be repealed, it would be possible for the new government to pass a new law permitting the Chinese to continue in the mines. The Labour Leader called this government action a "cowardly subterfuge." The labour organ pointed out that the Chinese workers were a direct result of British Administrative action. The Liberal Party had been returned to power "expressly on the promise that it would abolish Chinese slavery. It [had] not done so."

Despite the Imperial Government's modifications in the system, one of the worst problems remained—attacks upon isolated homes by the Chinese. With the continuing of these attacks and greater political freedom since the Liberals were in power, the former Boer generals began to make stronger protests. Louis Botha threatened, in a letter

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15 Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. LXXX, Cd. 3250, 1906, "Transvaal Constitution 1906, Letters Patent and Instructions to the Transvaal and Swaziland Order in Council," pp. 9-10; the provisions had earlier been presented to the Cabinet by Lord Elgin; Cabinet Papers, 37/82-23, February 12, 1906, pp. 4-6.

16 August 3, 1906.
to the Transvaal Attorney-General Sir Richard Solomon, to send a deputation to England to urge immediate repatriation of all Chinese unless the outrages could be stopped. When the Attorney-General replied that though the government would do its best it was impossible to give such assurances, Botha asked for permission to send the delegation to London. In a telegram he urged that the Imperial Government "adopt drastic measures to end present intolerable situation." In forwarding the telegram to London, Selborne commented that he was "in no way surprised at the terms of this telegram" as he had "the greatest sympathy" for isolated inhabitants of the Witwatersrand area. He termed the present position an "intolerable one for them."

Elgin replied the Imperial Government had allowed the continuation of Asiatic labour until the formation of self-government for the Transvaal, though the Imperial Government disliked many of the conditions. No further restrictions through any means would now take place. Even though the Chinese could stay temporarily, the police must control all lawlessness using the laws already at their disposal. "If this means increased cost, the extra expense should be charged . . . on those who have imported the disorderly element."

In the fall of 1906, word leaked out in London about some sort of systematic vice in the Chinese labour camps. While at first the

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Transvaal officialdom denied the allegation, the admission was gained that there had been some sort of investigation during which any suspect was repatriated.\(^\text{19}\)

The Transvaal Government at the request of the Imperial Government initiated an inquiry into the matter under the supervision of a young civil servant, J. A. S. Bucknill. His report indicates that while some vice did occur the stories in the London papers were greatly exaggerated. He found that a few isolated cases of prostitution with white women had previously taken place. He had received police assurances that this was limited and had been stopped as soon as the police had been informed. He found the charge that this had taken place on a large scale to be "substantially incorrect."\(^\text{20}\)

In regard to the second charge in the papers' report which indicated that homosexuality was prevalent in the labour camps, he found that "there can be no reasonable doubt that there does exist amongst the Chinese Indentured Labourers a certain amount of sodomy." Pointing out the difficulty of determining its extent, he did not believe that it existed "in any abnormal or grave degree." He said that where found the practitioners were immediately sent back. He also stated that the practice had not been carried out in such a fashion as to contaminate the natives.\(^\text{21}\)

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\(^{19}\) *Times*, November 5, 1906.


The whole matter received the attention of both Houses of Parliament. The Archbishop of Canterbury, reminding the Lords that vice had been his primary concern about Chinese labour from the beginning, asked Elgin about it. The Colonial Secretary related the findings of Bucknill. He also immediately cleared all officials of any complicity. Elgin pointed out that the inquiry had been secret because the evidence was so bad that a court would have discussed it behind closed doors. For this same reason, the report had to remain secret. He promised that any man found guilty would be immediately repatriated. To forestall further questions about publication, he said that there was nothing which he held that could be published with "due regard to public decency." 22

Lord Harris, himself a mine owner, immediately pledged the owners full support in stamping out the vice. The Tories through Lansdowne only asked for full assurance that no officials were involved in the least, which was immediately given. 23

The same day Lehmann moved an adjournment of the Commons to call attention to a grave matter; the gross immorality in the Chinese compounds as disclosed by the Bucknill report. He admitted that the subject was a disagreeable and detestable one, but it had to be done. If these things were true, what did the government intend to do? He saw only one solution—immediate repatriation. 24

22 Debates (Lords), CLXV, 39 and 48-50, November 15, 1906.
23 Ibid., cols. 51 and 54.
24 Debates (Commons), CLXV, 129 and 191-197.
After A. Mason seconded the motion saying it would be a relief to know the results either way, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Colonies began his explanation of the Bucknill report. After giving Bucknill's background, he pointed out that twenty-six witnesses had been heard and medical reports had been received from fifteen medical officers. He indicated that the government would not publish the report. He thought the evidence upon which the report was based clearly unprintable and of an essentially confidential nature. After making the same promise that Elgin had made regarding the repatriation of any one suspected of vice, "however many that might be," Churchill concluded, "the revelation of Mr. Bucknill's report disclosed a sufficiently unhealthy, unwholesome, and unnatural condition of affairs to seal the fate of Chinese labour." 25

The former Tory Colonial Secretary, Lyttelton, refused to believe what he had heard without an opportunity to examine the report for himself. He simply could not believe this could sneak by the government inspectors. When the Prime Minister rose to speak, he admitted that it had been an error not to have given Lyttelton, who had been responsible for the earlier implementation of the policy, access to the report. He apologized for the oversight. He termed the evidence with the report to be of a "most nauseous character." The motion was then withdrawn. 26

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25 Ibid., cols. 197-199 and 204-205.
26 Ibid., cols. 213 and 216.
Justice commented upon the debate in an almost insolent fashion when it said:

Yet here is the House of Commons, which systematically neglects the conditions of workers at home, dealing with the unpleasant business in the most solemn hypocritical fashion, as if nobody could possibly have foreseen what all the world knew was certain to occur. Now, too, it appears that immorality will achieve what no amount of protest on other grounds could bring about. The Chinese will be sent home because they offended the Nonconformist conscience, not because they displace white labour.27

Later on members of Commons asked why some papers seemed to have a good knowledge of the report. Only one outsider had officially seen the report, the Liberal member who had brought the original charges to the government. He said he had not passed any information on. Members then asked what the Prime Minister was going to do about the leak and would he allow some Conservatives to see the report. He replied that he would not allow anyone to see the report nor would he punish anyone for the so-called leaks.28

A meeting in Johannesburg protested the charges of vice in the compounds as untrue. Approximately four thousand attended the meeting which degenerated into a shouting match and ultimately a fight when the anti-Chinese factions attempted to put in a resolution nullifying the effect of the original motion. From this point there is an eye-witness account written by a labour sympathizer who forwarded it to the Labour

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27 November 24, 1906.

28 Times, November 22, 1906.
Leader. He said that as soon as the amendments were proposed,

All hell broke loose, and the staffs and stiffs roared and yelled and whistled and bellowed, and squirmed, and wriggled as if they were on the hot plates of the inferno itself.

Looking down from the platform it was one of the most grimly humorous spectacles that I have ever witnessed. The historic anti-Chinese meeting in the same hall two years ago was noth to it.

We twenty lit cigars and cagarettes and waited for the beast to quiet down a bit.

Another try. The beast was wounded, and howled more ferociously than ever. Another shot was put in, but it just got through the rhino hide, and irritated the brute the more.

Another try. The result was disastrous. The brute put down its head, and rushed to gore us. Two fists met through my hat; Whitside knocked his man down; Goldman walked over another; Outhwaite put up a prayer over the Town Clerk, as he was only a "Dove," the Mayor had to put up his "mitts": ... But the twenty held their own against the two hundred on the platform.

How things were going in the hall we scarcely knew. All we could see were the reporters, who had clamoured onto the platform table. The police then cleared the platform. Before leaving, however, Lucas, Kneebone, and Back shouted for a meeting on the Market Square which is about a mile away. . . .

When they reached the square the anti-Chinese amendments were easily carried as the organized opposition had disappeared. 29

It was suggested that the actions of the mine owners caused the riot. They supposedly imported some eight hundred men in an attempt to carry their protest resolutions hoping to embarrass the government.

The Rand Daily Mail suggested that this failure of the imports greatly strengthened the opposition to the Chinese, the center of which the paper placed in Johannesburg. 30

29 December 16, 1906.

30 Guardian, November 27, 1906.
When the oft-promised Letters Patent were finally released, the *Times* commented upon the Constitution. It wished the colony well in becoming a self-governing colony, but maintained the government had taken a great risk in setting it up. Turning to the Chinese labour clause, the paper said the Liberals included it only to please the political constituencies at home. Supposedly, the Imperial Government trusted the colony in setting up this type of self-government. The *Times* didn't think the restrictions on the Chinese showed the Imperial Government really trusted the infant government. Its Johannesburg correspondent echoed the dislike of the Constitution. He said, "The idea is gaining ground that the clauses relating to Chinese labour involve interference not only with the future legislative freedom of the colony, but even with existing contracts. If this is proven to be the case, the Constitution is likely to be condemned by both local parties." 31

In the Transvaal the *Het Volk*, meeting in Congress at the time, accepted the new Constitution with an enthusiasm which the *Guardian* correspondent believed precluded the pro-Chinese groups in the Transvaal gaining any supporters amongst the Boers. The pro-Chinese, on the other hand, represented by Courtney Leonard described the "servile clauses" of the Constitution as an insult to the colony. These were sent by the Liberal Party in the name of the King in order to perpetuate the lie that the people of the colony were slave drivers.

31 December 13 and 14, 1906.
He charged the labour clauses offended every principle of British legislation in the past. They abolish the right of contract and confiscated private property without compensation.\textsuperscript{32} It is interesting to note that he viewed the Chinese workman as private property.

In Parliament, both Houses discussed the grant of the Letters Patent. In the Tory dominated Lords, Lord Harris set the tone when he warned that repatriation would create dissatisfied colonists because the greatest industry of the Transvaal would be harmed. In Commons, Churchill, after rehashing the arguments he first used to present the Letters Patent, asked for and received the House's approval for them.\textsuperscript{33}

When in the middle of December, 1906, Selborne reported the arrival of the last Chinese, he said that 2,129 men had arrived and 3,716 licenses had not been used. The Colonial Secretary noted that the figures did not agree and asked why. Selborne claimed an error allowed two hundred fifty-nine more men into the country than there were licenses granted. He said it was an actual mistake on the part of someone in the mines department.\textsuperscript{34}

Elgin cabled that those Chinese had to be shipped home. He wanted to know details in regard to cost and how it would be paid. In

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Guardian}, December 17, 1906; \textit{Times}, December 17, 1906.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Debates} (Commons), CLXII, 959-960 and 1139, December 17, 1906.

\textsuperscript{34} Exchange of Telegrams between Selborne and Elgin, December 15 and 27, 1906 and January 1, 1907, in Great Britain, \textit{Parliamentary Papers}, Vol. LVIII, Cd. 3405, 1907, "Correspondence Relating to the Introducing of Chinese Labourers into the Transvaal in Excess of the Number of Licenses Issued," p. 4.
addition, he held the Superintendent of Foreign Labour responsible for the mistake. The Governor replied that it was an honest mistake. The Transvaal Government would have to pay an estimated forty pounds per man plus travel expenses to repatriate these men. It would be a heavy burden, Selborne thought, to inflict upon the colony, particularly at a transitional time such as this. The Colonial Secretary finally relented because it was an honest mistake and the heavy cost involved. He reminded Selborne that he was allowing these men despite his pledge to the House that no more Chinese would be allowed.35

When the Transvaal parties were formed to contest seats in the new Parliament, the question of Chinese labour came forth as a political question for the new self-governing Colony. The Progressive Party, representing the mine owners, was the only party not calling for repatriation of the Chinese. With the National Association, Het Volk and Labour parties behind repatriation, the only question left was its timing.

The official Progressive view was that there should be no increase in the numbers who worked the mine, but that the present number should be kept until an economically efficient substitute could be found. The party also recommended that the newly elected Parliament should appoint a commission of inquiry as one of its official duties. Certain mine owners, such as Sir George Farrar, tried to frighten people into voting for the party. He claimed, on the basis of a recent

35 Exchange of telegrams between Elgin and Selborne, January 7, 10, and 17, 1907, in Cd. 3405, pp. 4-6.
European visit, that there was no hope for fresh European capital as long as the supply of labour remained uncertain. There was no use trying to operate the mines without sufficient capital and labour. Unless the new Transvaal Parliament enacted an ordinance similar to the old Imperial one, he said, the entire country would be ruined.36

In a final election manifesto the Progressives changed slightly. They now termed Chinese labour supplementary. When the current shortage ended, they were perfectly willing to end the importation. Until such conditions came to pass, the Progressives felt the Chinese should be able to renew their contracts. The party also felt that the new government should create a Commission to once again investigate the whole labour supply system.37

When the Het Volk met to discuss a platform upon which to fight the election, all delegates accepted a plank calling for the repatriation of the Chinese. Former General Louis Botha in presenting the plank said that if the Chinese continued to come, there soon would be no work at all for whites in the mines. All work would be done by Chinese. In a later speech to his constituents the General, however, modified this so it was more palatable to the mine owners. He termed the talk about immediate repatriation without regard for the economic consequences nonsense. The purpose of his party was to restore confidence in the country. To hurt or embarrass the mining industry would not achieve this goal.38

36 Times, October 20, 1906 and January 7, 1907.
37 Ibid., February 14, 1907.
38 Ibid., December 5, 1906 and February 14, 1907.
Former Boer General Jan Christian Smuts, now playing a major role in the party under Botha, began his campaigning claiming the party did not want to retain the Chinese. He thought if any mines were closed down in an attempt to bring political pressure upon the new government, the government should work the mine on behalf of the shareholders. Later, he tried to be more conciliatory stating that though he favored immediate repatriation upon the expiration of contracts, he hoped to keep the mines open above all. Since the expiration date of the first contracts came before the Parliament would really have a chance to meet to discuss the matter, he hoped an arrangement might be made with the Imperial Government to allow the contracts to be extended two or three months in order that the new government could properly discuss the Chinese. This extension would hold, he hoped, until the local Transvaal Government could suggest some means of supplying a substitute for the Chinese.39

The Nationalist Party, a group of Englishmen, were considered to be quite Liberal upon most subjects. In order to provide the party with a leading candidate, Sir Richard Solomon, the Transvaal Attorney-General under Selborne, resigned in order to run as a Nationalist. Indicating the closeness of this party to the Het Volk, he declared that he fully accepted the anti-Chinese platform of that party. Since Solomon proposed to stand against one of the leading mine owners, he would probably be defeated. In any case, a member of the government

39Ibid., December 31, 1906 and January 1, 1907; Guardian, January 31, 1907.
had shown he believed the mines could maintain a profit without the Chinese and was willing to stand for election on this point. 40

When the election results were tabulated, Het Volk held a clear majority of five over all other parties. Those who could be taken together as anti-Chinese held a majority of twenty-three out of sixty-nine seats or an even two-thirds of the seats. With the absolute Boer majority, Botha assumed the leadership of the new government assisted by Smuts. 41

At the time of the election, Selborne appointed the members of the Upper House according to the Constitution. In doing so he chose a number of men not distinguished in politics or any other field. The Transvaal Leader commenting editorially said, "It is unthinkable that such a Council should act in judgement upon the Lower House; it is placing political pygmies to supervise the work of giants." 42

When the new Transvaal Parliament was formally opened, the Governor of the Colony read the opening address. Referring to Chinese labour, Selborne said, "My ministers are resolved that the employment of Chinese labour on the mines of the Witwatersrand shall cease at the earliest possible moment." He added that nothing would be done until the regular session which was scheduled to meet in June after the first of the contracts were over. When the Parliament prepared to adjourn

40 Times, January 16, 1907.
41 Guardian, February 27 and March 2 and 5, 1907.
42 Ibid., February 22 and 23, 1907.
its special session, an amendment to the motion was produced to force a decision upon Chinese labour, but it was defeated forty-four to twenty-one.43

The Transvaal Government immediately took steps to try to solve the labour problem. First, it appointed a Commission to investigate the employment of both black and white labour as replacements for the Chinese. It should also inquire into the use of more mining machinery. The Commission appeared to be fairly balanced with representatives of industry, labour, and government. The government also appointed a native labour bureau to assist the mine owners' association in recruiting.44

Prime Minister Botha announced his decision not to reenact the Labour Ordinance, but to send the Chinese home upon the expiration of their contracts. The repatriation would begin immediately with some sixteen thousand sent home by the end of the year. There would be no temporary renewal of the contracts, though the government would watch closely for any signs of labour necessity. Lastly, he declared, "the presence of the Chinese is in the highest degree inimical to the interests of the Transvaal."45


44 Times, April 9 and May 7, 1907.

Coinciding with this announcement, the Imperial Government announced it had negotiated a substantial loan (five million pounds) for improvement of existing business and for new business in the Transvaal. It took but little imagination to charge collusion. For relieving the Imperial Government of the embarrassment of Chinese labour, the Boer Government would gain a loan.

The House of Commons saw the obvious when Lyttelton asked if the two announcements were merely coincidental. He thought the loan was only for the benefit of the Boers and that the British business interests would have to pay the bill. Churchill once again defended the government answering that the Transvaal Parliament had shown it was worthy of the faith given it. It was on the scene, knew the details of Chinese labour, and had stopped it. Turning to charges of a deal, he termed this "grossly unfair" to both Botha and the government. After all, the General had been consistently opposed to Chinese labour since the first discussions in 1903.

After his ministers denied the charge in the Transvaal Parliament, Botha himself finally made an official statement indignantly denying any charges of collusion. He merely carried out the election pledges which he had made. He felt there would be no peace in the country until the last of the Asiatics had left. "The ministry would remove the canker by its roots and restore the Transvaal to

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46 *Times*, June 16, 1907.

47 *Debates (Commons)*, CLXXVI, 714 and 724-726, June 20, 1907.
health." If the Chinese had stayed, he felt they would have completely displaced the white men as a working force in the colony. He did give the mine owners some hope when he said the government would "afford the mines every facility to get natives, but the mines must take their own measures to replace the Chinese. The government would safeguard and assist the industry in every way, but would never assist one class to dominate another." 48

Botha introduced his bill in the Transvaal Parliament to allow the Chinese to complete their contracts instead of forcing them to leave at the end of that year. It passed the Legislative Assembly, though the amendment which the mine owners wanted failed. This would have relieved the importers of paying for repatriation, since the Chinese could not renew their contracts contrary to the original provisions. 49

Although taking a good bit of time to decide, the Imperial Government finally approved the Transvaal legislation in regard to allowing completion of contracts. Elgin hoped that the ministers of the Transvaal would do all in their power to correct any and all evils in practice and would end the system completely as quickly as possible. 50

48 Guardian, June 21, 1907.

49 Telegram from Selborne to Elgin, August 24, 1907, in Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. LXXIII, Cd. 3994, 1908, "Correspondence Relating to the Transvaal Indentured Labour Law Temporary Continuence Act, 1907," p. 4.

50 Telegram from Elgin to Selborne, November 27, 1907, in Cd. 3994, p. 8.
The mine owners as a whole were willing to accept the decision of the government. Abe Bailey, an owner, said:

I have always supported the introduction of Chinese who are excellent labourers, as an experiment and temporarily in order to get over the setback of the gold industry occasioned by the war. The Chinese have played their part, and they can now be repatriated by degrees without greatly disorganizing the industry. . . . In my opinion sufficient native labour will be found to replace gradually the Chinese who will probably be repatriated as natives are found to take their place. Owing to the improvements in machine hand drills, fewer natives are now required underground.

Even so enthusiastic exponent of Chinese labour as Sir George Farrar accepted the position in regard to the Asiatics. The experiment was over. It had cost over a million and a half pounds so that he felt the owners would never contemplate a renewal of it.51

The experiment was for all practical purposes over. The last of the Chinese would not leave until 1910 as it would take that long for the contracts to run out. By that time all Chinese would have left the country and there would be no traces of these men in South Africa.52

Although there were still labour shortages in the mines, the solution was no longer the use of indentured Asiatic labour. The government attempted to examine the source of Kaffir labour again, as the establishment of a new Commission of inquiry showed. The Botha Government had shown its willingness to work with the mines in any solution short of bringing in Asiatic labour which would not fit the conventional mold of South Africa. It even went so far as to allow the retention of the Chinese beyond the original deadline in order to smooth the transitional period.

51Times, October 21, 1907; Guardian, November 8, 1907.
52Walker, South Africa, p. 519.
Chinese labourers worked in the Transvaal from June of 1904 until 1910, although the decision to eliminate them from the mines took place in 1907. Throughout the three years that their fate remained undecided, their presence created a stir not only in the Colony but also in the halls of the Imperial Government. How much of this controversy really had a legitimate base and how much was merely political propaganda?

The basic reason for the importation must clearly have been economic. There could be no doubt that the recovery of the mines after the Boer War was not nearly as rapid as had been expected. There was also no doubt that not enough Kaffirs had returned to the mines immediately after the war. The question which must remain in this connection is whether or not these expectations were greater than they should have been. At any rate, the mine owners believed they needed additional labourers in order to pay satisfactory profits to their shareholders. To attach the economy of the Transvaal to the prosperity of the mines was not an unrealistic position as the gold mines produced, even before the war, the major revenue for the Colony. The British authorities in the Transvaal tried to bolster the Colony's economy by aiding the major
industry. Their attempts, however, to use this dependence upon the mines to build a solely British colony over the heads of the Boers is an entirely different matter.

Even though it was fairly easy for the owners to convince the already favorable local government that this labour importation was needed, it remained more difficult to convince those in England. The Tory Government willingly listened to its civil servants in the field. Perhaps it listened even more readily because Colonial Secretary Lyttelton owed his position, in part at least, to Milner's recommendation. The Liberal Party, however, remained essentially opposed to all aspects of this importation. While the Liberals publicly emphasized the principles of human dignity and liberty, certainly some of their opposition must have been for purely opposition's sake.

When the Chinese arrived, they were placed in compounds on the mine premises. These residential areas were never condemned for their lack of creature comforts by any who visited them. They contained conveniences which were unknown to the majority of working men in England. The fact that the Transvaal society forced them to remain within the compounds except for a temporary forty-eight-hour pass made these compounds appear bad. These restraints upon the Chinese left a bad impression on many, including those who realized the necessity for their employment. They were kept in this manner because the Transvaal did not want this alien culture turned loose in an already complicated racial situation.

Pent up conditions, not the least of which was boredom, made it very easy for abuses to take place. It was hard for the men to voice
complaints against any possible poor treatment, at least in the first months. There were recorded cases of physical beatings administered to the Chinese by overseers, both white and Chinese. Since no other way existed to voice their complaints, the Chinese resorted to strikes and demonstrations, and sometimes simply escaped into the sparsely settled countryside.

To say, on the other hand, that the Chinese were all docile would be an exaggeration. Disreputable Chinese had been persuaded to seek their fortunes in the Transvaal. Certainly, these men did attack the homesteaders, perhaps sometimes, however, only in order to survive once they had escaped. These attacks terrorized the Rand. Many residents were frightened by the very fact that these aliens were loose in the countryside. It cannot be denied that they caused a great deal of trouble. The government recognized this when it made provisions to rearm the residents. All those who did not have the means to purchase weapons to defend themselves could borrow a weapon from the government.

The government also attempted directly to control the Chinese to the best of its ability. When matters got out of hand, it sent large numbers of men to the Rand to keep the Asiatics in their compounds and to keep disturbances at a minimum. Despite these actions, many attacks continued because the homesteads were so remote. It was practically impossible to put a trooper at every point toward which the men might flee.

These government remedies did not allay criticism from those continuously opposed to Chinese labour. They used these disturbances
to attack the government for ever having allowed importation in the first place. The opponents could also adopt an "I told you so" attitude. These attacks kept the issue before the public. Just about the time the furor from one disturbance quieted down, another outbreak would bring the issue back into the main stream of political controversy. It provided the Liberals with a convenient weapon to attack the Conservative Government. While it took a good deal of explanation to present the case against tariff reform, the case against the Chinese could be quickly presented: "Chinese slavery." It could also be made to appear to threaten not only white labour in the Transvaal, but also in England. The Liberals saw an opportunity to launch a demogogic attack against the Tories, and they made the best of it. Even those who had little education could understand "Chinese slavery" though they might not understand the complex financial workings of tariff reform. That it bore such weight could be seen in the readiness with which Joseph Chamberlain disassociated himself from his party's policy.

In assessing the relative importance of Chinese labour to the results of the 1906 election, one must be careful not to give it too much credit, nor, on the other hand, too little for the great success of the Liberals. While Chinese labour, as used by the Liberals, strengthened their electoral appeal, it was certainly only one of many explanations of their success. From the Tory viewpoint it was certainly a major irritation. It forced them to spend considerable time on the defensive rather than in defining their own platform. It remained one of a number of disastrous mistakes of the Balfour regime which the Liberals could so easily exploit.
Yet, when the Liberals achieved office, they could not over-
night eliminate the Chinese from the mines. Though they could and did
stop all future importation, that which had already been licensed had to
be allowed. To enforce immediate repatriation, or to stop those
licenses already granted, would have interfered with the right of pri-
ivate contract. In addition, the mines now depended upon this labour,
and to eliminate it would be disastrous for the mining industry. In
fact, the Liberals permitted the Botha Government in the Transvaal to
allow the contracts to run out despite a constitutional provision to
the contrary. Despite both election promises and radical pressure, the
government could not simply dismiss the Chinese. The failure to immi-
nately eradicate Chinese labour left the party open to cries of insin-
cerity from both sides. These actions also lent some justification to
the Tories' insistence on the need for the Chinese. There is no doubt
that the Chinese stimulated the recovery of the mines which in turn
helped the rest of the country to regain sooner its economic balance.
Some have suggested that this upturn benefited not only the Transvaal,
but all South Africa.

In the same sense that the Chinese helped the Liberals to power,
they helped the Transvaal to achieve self-government. While the Tories
insisted upon an intermediate step before full self-government for the
Transvaal, the Liberals did not hesitate, thus hastening the unification
of South Africa. It would have been very hard to achieve unification
with part of the area not a self-governing colony. The continued presence
of the Chinese, on the other hand, would have hampered unification, since
Cape Colony remained adamantly opposed to them from the beginning.
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