

# Chinese and Canadian Influences on Chinese Politics in Vancouver, 1900-1947\*

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This paper is necessarily a preliminary and localized investigation of what I expect to develop into some analyses of the interaction of Chinese and Canadian influences upon Chinese Canadian political institutions and behaviour in the first half of the present century. In this essay I will simply try to summarize issues emanating from China on the one hand and those from Canada on the other, and to describe the ways in which Vancouver's Chinese dealt with issues from each of these sources. The more sophisticated questions relating to the interactions of China-derived issues and Canada-context issues and the complexities of organizational and leadership interaction as related to those interactions are matters that must be left for a later essay. I will attempt to separate "China" issues from "Canada" issues, while recognizing that such a distinction is somewhat artificial and mainly of preliminary analytical value.

It is probably the case that during the period in question "China" influences and "China" issues were of more consistent significance and concern to the Chinese in Vancouver than issues in Canada. Leaving aside the thorny issue of whether the Chinese in Vancouver intended to sojourn or to settle, they were, in the first instance, bearers of Chinese political culture and, in the second case, conditioned by the legal and political limitations of their life in British Columbia.

In China, political organization traditionally took the form, among intellectuals, the primary political actors, of cliques held together by personal ties that had been forged on varying bases; among businessmen, political organization was likely to be almost congruent with business or trade association, acting thereby as a political instrument for the expression of economic interest. In overseas Chinese communities, such as Van-

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couver's, political leaders were usually businessmen; hence, the small number of intellectuals in such communities would rarely lead independent political cliques but would instead establish intellectual or quasi-intellectual organizations that tended to be associated with organizations that were dominated by businessmen. Whatever the forms of organization, traditional Chinese politics typically involved negotiation by a small group or else independent political brokerage. In either case, the element of personal relationship was strong.

Let us turn then from the traditional Chinese political heritage to the critical limitations upon Chinese political life in Vancouver in 1900, which shortly thereafter were three in number. First, in British Columbia (and in one other province in Canada) Chinese lacked the vote. The basis of disfranchisement (or non-enfranchisement) was entirely racial. A Chinese born in Canada or naturalized as a Canadian citizen, if he resided in British Columbia, still could not vote. From that flowed other restrictions. Since the federal franchise effectively depended upon the provincial, those not on the British Columbia voters' list could not vote federally either. And within British Columbia, those not on the provincial voters' list could not become lawyers, accountants or pharmacists. Since the city of Vancouver also managed to remove the Chinese from its voters' lists around 1900, the Vancouver Chinese were completely disfranchised, with the implications that have been mentioned and others that may be imagined. Second, beginning in 1904, the Chinese, alone among immigrant groups, were required to pay a \$500 headtax in order to enter Canada. That provision, and subsequent legislation and policies, limited the Vancouver Chinese population to one of mostly single males. There was little family life, and when a native-born generation of Chinese Canadians began to appear in Vancouver during World War I, it was very small and its political activities were necessarily limited not only by its lack of the franchise but by its very smallness. Third, China, the "home country" of Vancouver's Chinese, was consistently, from 1900 to 1947, weak, lacking in prestige, and of only limited help in supporting the interests of the Chinese of Canada.

### I. "*China*" Issues

Let us now consider some "China" issues and the way they were dealt with by Vancouver's Chinese. The politics of China began to reach Vancouver in a significant way in the late 1890s. At that moment China was in a state of political crisis. Defeat by Japan in the Sino-Japanese war of

1894-95 had shocked the Chinese political world to its roots. Proposals for the radical reform of the Chinese government, military and economy now began to be voiced. Under the patronage of the young emperor, a group of such reformers, led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, seemingly achieved power in the summer of 1898. For three months the Emperor issued an amazing series of reform edicts embodying their proposals for constitutional government with representative assemblies, government encouragement to industry and commerce, and fundamental educational changes. The real power, however, resided with the Empress Dowager, who soon ousted the reformers into exile under threat of their lives, sent the Emperor back into retirement, and, for a time, reversed the reform edicts.

While Kang's group sought reform within a constitutional monarchy, Sun Yat-sen's reaction to the defeat by Japan was to promote revolution, which would replace the Qing dynasty with a republic. Sun's early efforts at revolution were abortive and he fled into exile in 1895. Thus, by 1899, both reformers and revolutionaries were in exile, seeking bases overseas from which to launch their efforts for change in China. For the next dozen years, until the Revolution of 1911, Kang, Liang and Sun became itinerant orators, organizers and fund-raisers, going wherever there were overseas Chinese communities of any size. Since Canada had a substantial Chinese population by 1899, it became an important stopping place for all three of these political figures.

Kang Youwei visited Canada three times: in 1899, 1902 and 1904. During his first visit he established the first North American branch of his Empire Reform Association (Baohuanghui) in Victoria which, at that time, contained a somewhat larger (say 5,000, as compared to 3,000) Chinese population than Vancouver did. A second branch of the Reform Association was immediately set up in Vancouver and, as Vancouver's Chinese community outstripped Victoria's in the period 1899-1911, Vancouver increasingly came to be the centre of Reform Association and other Chinese political activity in British Columbia, although Victoria continued, up to 1947, to enjoy a kind of "associate" status and a partial sharing of political leaders.

Kang's association attracted the support of the older, more prosperous Chinese merchants in Canada.<sup>1</sup> Most of these men had resided in North

<sup>1</sup> Lee Tung-hai (David T. H. Lee), *Jianada Huaqiao Shi* (History of the Chinese in Canada) (Taipei, 1967), pp. 275-89; Wu Xianzi, *Zhongguo Minzhuxianzheng-dang Dangshi* (History of the Democratic Constitutionalist Party) (San Francisco, 1952), pp. 25-27.

America for many years and so were conversant with the strengths and weaknesses of Western societies. Some were interpreters for the Immigrations or Customs services or for the courts. They were, in other words, a rather cosmopolitan elite, in favour of modernizing China through selective borrowing from the West. One Western institution they favoured was the modern political party, the conception of which was just developing in China. The Empire Reform Association was intended to be just that.

By Kang's third visit to Canada there were twelve Canadian branches of the Association and a reported 7,000 members.<sup>2</sup> In Victoria and in Vancouver the Association had established a Chinese Patriotic School, the one in Vancouver being the first Chinese school in that city.<sup>3</sup> In Vancouver the Association also sponsored one of the earliest Chinese newspapers in Canada, the *Daily News (Yat Sun Bo)*, established under the encouragement of Kang's associate, Liang Qichao, who visited Vancouver in 1903.<sup>4</sup> Their interest in Chinese politics was intense. At the height of the Boxer Movement in 1900, when Western missionaries and diplomats in China were besieged by the anti-Western Boxer troops and foreign military forces were being dispatched to rescue them, Won Alexander Cumyow of Vancouver, secretary of the Empire Reform Association in Canada, announced to the English-language press that his group was ready to send overseas Chinese troops, including some from Canada, to accompany the relief forces. The idea was that these would punish the Empress Dowager for backing the Boxers and rescue the Emperor from her clutches.<sup>5</sup> There is no indication that such an expedition was sent.

The prosperity of the Empire Reform Association turned out to be of short duration. Internal dissension was part of the problem. A company had been formed by the Association to promote investment in Western

<sup>2</sup> Lee Tung-hai, p. 282. Either the 7,000 figure is inflated or the membership included more than prosperous merchants. It is unlikely that there would be 7,000 prosperous merchants in a community numbering only 28,000 in 1911. An estimate that 35 percent of the Chinese in Canada joined the Reform Association shortly after its foundation, based upon a Reform Association source, is found in Eve Armentrout-Ma, "A Chinese Association in North America: the Pao-Huang Hui from 1899 to 1904," *Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i*, IV, 9 (November 1978), 91.

<sup>3</sup> Guan Qiyi, "Jianada Huaqiao jiaoyu shilue," *Jianada Weiduoli Zhonghua huiguan chengli qishiwu, Huaqiao xuexiao chengli liushi zhounian jinian tekan* (Brief History of Chinese Education in Canada, in Special Publication to Commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Victorian Chinese Benevolent Association and the 60th anniversary of the Victoria Chinese School) (Victoria, 1960), Part IV, p. 17; Chen Kwong Min, *Meizhou Huaqiao tongjian* ("The Chinese in the Americas") (New York, 1950), p. 419.

<sup>4</sup> Lee Tung-hai, pp. 347 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Victoria Colonist*, 31 July 1900.

China. After many shares had been sold in Canada, the company collapsed, amidst accusations of mishandling of funds. Meanwhile, shortly after 1905, competing political groups began to appear and to attract support away from the Empire Reform Association. By 1911 the *Yat Sun Bo* had ceased publication and the Empire Reform Association had passed its peak.<sup>6</sup>

The Empire Reform Association, though not the only political group in Vancouver's Chinatown, was the one best-known to non-Chinese. Its leaders had wide contacts in white business and government circles and sought their support for the Association's goals in China. White political and business leaders, for their part, found the Reform movement interesting as a hopeful indicator of improved trade and political relations between China and Western Canada.<sup>7</sup>

During the first several years after 1899 the Empire Reform Association enjoyed some support in Canada from the Hongmen Zhigongtang (Cheekongtong).<sup>8</sup> The parent organization of the Cheekongtong was a secret society in China which was opposed to the rule of the Qing dynasty. Since political opposition was illegal in China the Cheekongtong was necessarily secret there. In Canada the Cheekongtong had had a long history in British Columbia prior to 1900. Its leaders and members were small merchants and labourers, who lacked the polish and scholarly interests of the richer merchants. But their interests overlapped those of Kang's supporters, since they, too, were concerned about strengthening and modernizing China. Since the Empire Reform Association seemed to be the only group with a program for doing so, the Cheekongtong allied itself, for a time, with the Association. After 1905, however, as revolutionary groups began to appear in the Chinatowns of Vancouver and Victoria, the Cheekongtong moved away from its affiliation with the reformers and into an alliance, finally, with Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary League (T'ung-meng Hui), whose membership and interests were closer to their own.

Sun Yat-sen visited Canada three times: in 1897, 1910 and 1911. His first visit was devoted to fund-raising in the Chinatowns of Victoria and Vancouver. The second visit had much the same character, but in the meantime Vancouver's Chinatown had become much more important

<sup>6</sup> Lee Tung-hai, pp. 290-96, 384.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 280-82; James Morton, *In the Sea of Sterile Mountains* (Vancouver, 1974), p. 200; *Vancouver World*, 3 April 1903, UBC Library, Special Collections Division, Cumyow Collection, Box 1-5.

<sup>8</sup> Lee Tung-hai, pp. 276, 287.

than Victoria's, and, in both places, by 1910, there had developed an atmosphere of intense political excitement. In Vancouver, as in other overseas Chinese communities and in China itself, the decade 1899-1901 witnessed a proliferation of newspapers associated with one or another political group. In China intellectuals were forming "study societies" to discuss China's problems and needs; the overseas version of the "study society" was the "reading room" — found in Vancouver as in other overseas locales — where political literature about China was available and where political discussions were held. Both in China and overseas, such "study" and "reading" facilities were usually the basis of subsequent political groups.

In Vancouver's Chinatown a newspaper war was raging by 1910. Shortly after the reformers' *Yat Sun Bo* began publication, the bilingual *Wah Ying Yat Bo* (Chinese-English Daily News) had appeared. Originally Christian in ownership and interest, it gravitated into the hands of the Empire Reform Association briefly and then to the Cheekongtong, where it disappeared in 1908. In 1907 the Cheekongtong founded its own paper, the *Tai Hon Bo* (to be known as the *Tai Hon Kung Bo*, or "Chinese Times," after 1914, and still publishing in the 1970s). Revolutionary sentiment found expression first in the *Dai Luk Bo* (Mainland Times), published in Vancouver in 1908-09. Then, when Feng Tzu-yu, a follower of Sun Yat-sen, became editor of the Cheekongtang's *Tai Han Bo*, he turned that paper in the direction of the revolutionary cause. This was in line with the growing support for Sun among Cheekongtong members, whose North American Grandmaster had endorsed Sun's cause. During Sun's second visit in 1910, therefore (and his third visit the following year), the newspaper war in Vancouver was between the reformers' *Yat Sun Bo* and the Cheekongtong's *Tai Hon Bo*.<sup>9</sup>

Sun's visit in early 1911 was much more exciting than his two previous ones had been. A crowd of 1,000 people met him at the railway station. His daily lectures at the Chinese theatre on Canton Alley drew packed audiences of 1,000 or more each time, including many who were not sympathetic to the cause of revolution.<sup>10</sup> As Sun put it in a letter:

Since I arrived in Vancouver on the 8th, I have been royally received by all. Every day I lecture at the [Cheekongtong] hall or the theatre to audiences of 2-3,000. Even though it rains heavily there is unprecedented enthusiasm in

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 347-50; Feng Tzu-yu, *Huaqiao geming cuzhi shihua* (An informal history of overseas Chinese revolutionary organizations) (Taipei, 1954), pp. 69-70, 83.

<sup>10</sup> Lee Tung-hai, p. 302.

Vancouver. If people feel this way, the success of the Revolution is inevitable.<sup>11</sup>

But Sun, the Cheekongtong and the Empire Reform Association did not have the stage to themselves. The Qing dynasty — even the Empress Dowager — had seen the inevitability of drastic reform, and the dynasty wished to stay in power by leading the reform effort. It also wished to have the support of the overseas Chinese. It therefore competed with the reformers and revolutionaries in Chinatowns around the world. The Qing government sent out investigating commissions to determine the economic and political conditions of the Chinese abroad, and it followed these with consulates in key cities. Thus, an investigating commission visited British Columbia in 1900 and a consulate was established at Vancouver in 1908. An educational commissioner, bent on encouraging Chinese education abroad, visited Victoria in 1908. Meanwhile, the Qing government offered investment inducements and official titles for sale to overseas Chinese.<sup>12</sup> It is not known whether any Canadian Chinese responded.

The result of all this political competition and the political ferment within China itself was a great intensification of the political aspects of Chinese community life in Canada. If before Vancouver's Chinatown had been only mildly "political," it now became exceedingly so.

Revolution did come to China, beginning 10 October 1911. In the decade before that date there were many abortive revolutionary risings. One of the last and most important of these took place near Canton at a site later called Huang Hua Kang, on 29 March 1911. An attempted coup on that date was discovered and ruthlessly suppressed by the Qing government. Canada's Chinese provided the largest single overseas Chinese financial contribution (at least one third of the total) to the funding of this rising, and most of that money came from Vancouver, Victoria and smaller Chinese communities in B.C.<sup>13</sup> Today, the names of these

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>12</sup> Yen Ching-hwang, "Ch'ing's Sale of Honours and the Chinese Leadership in Singapore and Malaya (1877-1912)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, I, 2 (September 1970), 20-32; Michael Godley, "The Late Ch'ing Courtship of the Chinese in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXXIV, 2 (February 1975), 361-85; Lea E. Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism: The Genesis of the Pan-Chinese Movement in Indonesia* (Gelcoe, Ill., 1960); Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life*, 1850-1898 (New Haven, 1965); Lee Tung-hai, pp. 324-30.

<sup>13</sup> Sources disagree about the size of the Canadian Chinese contribution. A figure of Hong Kong \$63,000 is found in Yen Ching Hwang, *The Overseas Chinese and the 1911 Revolution* (Kuala Lumpur, 1976), p. 311 and in Chun-tu Hsueh, *Huang Hsing and the Chinese Revolution* (Stanford, 1961), p. 86. A Chinese Canadian source, Lee Tung-hai, presents a figure of "over \$100,000" (Hong Kong dollars). Lee Tung-hai, pp. 240-51.

communities and their Chinese organizations can be seen on the monument that commemorates this uprising. Vancouver's Chinese also contributed to the expenditures of the successful 1911 Revolution and the early republic that followed it.

During the period 1911-1919 "Chinese politics" in Vancouver centred upon the efforts of several groups to control the local Chinese Benevolent Association (or CBA). Since the CBA was supposed to be the dominant agency of internal control in the community as well as the community's spokesman to white government and society, it was a prize worth competing for. One of the major competitors was the Chinese Nationalist League, the Canadian branch of the Kuomintang (KMT), which had been organized in China as a post-revolutionary successor to Sun Yat-sen's T'ung-meng Hui. The other major competitor was the Cheekongtong, which was now registered in China as an open political party and, in Canada, was becoming both a welfare association and a Chinese political party. Increasingly, the Canadian Cheekongtong was now calling itself the Chinese Freemasons. Allies in 1910-1911, the Cheekongtong and Sun's revolutionaries were now on opposite sides both inside and outside of China. Once the 1911 Revolution had taken place, Sun's associates had founded the Kuomintang and, despite Sun's promises, the Cheekongtong, which had contributed so much money to the 1911 Revolution, was to go unrewarded, as Cheekongtong supporters saw it, for its efforts.<sup>14</sup> Instead, any benefits of the revolution were to go to the upstart KMT. There now began in Canada a KMT-Freemason rivalry that was to last through the 1970s.

At odds with the KMT, the Freemasons now moved back into an alliance with the Empire Reform Association, which had, since the overthrow of the Chinese Empire in 1912, changed its name to the Constitutional Party. But competition for dominance of the Vancouver CBA was not merely between the KMT on one hand and the Freemason-Constitutionalist alliance on the other. "Clan" (same-surname) associations and district (same home-region in China) associations also competed to dominate. The result was that in 1917 the Vancouver CBA constitution was rewritten to allow for election of its leadership by a formula of proportional representation of district associations or, in other words, regional merchant interest representation. Within a few years, however, an addi-

<sup>14</sup> For the Cheekongtong version see Wong Sam-duck, *Hongmen Geming Shi* (Revolutionary history of the Hongmen) (n.p., 1936) and Lin Honggong, *Jianadaren jadong Xinhai Geming* (Canadians' promotion of the 1911 revolution) (n.p., n.d.). The Kuomintang interpretation is found in the writings of Feng Tzu-yu.



tional provision allowed for the election of several “at large” members to the executive committee of the CBA.<sup>15</sup> Since this meant that clan (or surname) associations, as well as district (or regional) associations, could exercise influence in the CBA, the three political parties now competed for dominance in all of those associations — especially the Wong association, representing the most numerous surname group, and the Hoysun Ningyung Association, representing the largest district group.

In the China of the early 1920s Sun Yat-sen made an alliance with the Soviet Union in order to achieve the overthrow of the warlord groups that dominated the country. Part of the arrangement was to be an alliance between the KMT and the new and small Chinese Communist Party. The Soviet alliance and the “united front” of the KMT and the CCP, whose aims overlapped but were scarcely congruent, provoked great political controversy inside China and in overseas Chinese communities. Within the KMT there were three factions: a “left” group favoured the alliance and the United Front with the Communists; a “right” group opposed it; a “centre” group, headed by Chiang Kai-shek, watched and waited. Outside the KMT there were political groups that opposed the Kuomintang and all its works, and others that backed one or another of the warlords. The same divisions were found in Vancouver’s Chinatown, and the violent expression of political differences, characteristic of politics in China after 1900, was endemic in the Vancouver Chinese Community. At the moment when the precarious United Front was breaking up in China (1927), one of Vancouver Chinatown’s most spectacular murders occurred. The KMT cadre, Louie Mingha, who published a “left” KMT newspaper, the *Canada Morning News* (*Jianada Zhongguo chenbao*), and an associate were gunned down in their offices. A veteran leader of the Vancouver KMT, Tsang Shak-chun, was brought to trial, but the case was shortly dismissed for lack of evidence, and the identity of the killer was never established.<sup>16</sup>

After 1927 the KMT achieved a kind of hegemony in China. It did not firmly unite the country, but it clearly was the major political force, and its government in Nanking was recognized by all groups as the government of China. The KMT’s hegemony in China was matched by

<sup>15</sup> Feng Tzu-yu, *Huaqiao geming cuzhi shihua*, pp. 73-74; *Chinese Times* (*Tai Hon Kung Bo*), especially issues of 23 July, 7 August and 15 August 1918 and 16 December 1921.

<sup>16</sup> *Chinese Times*, 8-27 August, 9-15 September 1927; *ibid.*, 7 February, 6 March 1929; “Jianada tebie Dangbu,” (Special Party Branch, Canada), *Kuo Min Yat Po* (San Francisco), Sixth Anniversary Special Publication (1933?), pp. 78-80; Chen Kwong Min, p. 421.

its position in Vancouver. "Hegemony" is the proper word, because the KMT could not dominate. The Freemasons and Constitutionalists continued their joint opposition (the former being now much stronger than the latter), and there were frequent struggles over such issues as the use of the KMT flag, rather than the older republican flag, as the national banner, or the ritual of bowing to the portrait of Sun Yat-sen at public or school exercises. Sometimes these and other political differences led to violence, notably in Montreal and Winnipeg.<sup>17</sup> In Toronto they took the form of a newspaper war.<sup>18</sup> Vancouver and Victoria were not spared, and the controversies there threatened violence on a Montreal or Winnipeg scale until a Peace Preservation Committee was formed and successfully mediated.<sup>19</sup>

These tensions and diversions were partly overcome during the period of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945. Political differences in Vancouver's Chinatown were muted in what was to be a "united front" war effort. But, in fact, since the leadership of the anti-Japanese war in China was identified in Canada with the KMT and its government, the wartime united front in Canada was actually led by the local KMT and, as Canada became the ally of the Chungking government after 1941, the prestige and power of the KMT in Vancouver and other Canadian Chinatowns was greatly increased. Even so, the KMT never fully controlled either the Vancouver CBA or political life in Vancouver's Chinatown in general.

Shortly after the war had ended, these realities were formalized in the creation of a triumvirate executive at the apex of the CBA structure. Two of its members represented the KMT and the Freemasons; the third represented the Wong Association and the Hoysun Ningyung Association. This device was the work of (Wong) Foon Sien. As a leader in the Wong and Hoysun Associations and the Chinese leader best known to white government and society, Foon Sien had the stature necessary to be the permanent occupant of the third position. Above all else, he was an unusually skilled mediator, which made him the perfect balance between the two contending forces.

Paralleling all these specific issues derived from China and its politics was the continuing concern of Vancouver's Chinese with their home

<sup>17</sup> *Chinese Times*, 11 January-26 April 1934; *ibid.*, 17 March 1930; *ibid.*, 7 February 1931. I have tried to allow for the fact that our only source on these controversies is the Freemasons' newspaper, the *Chinese Times*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 June 1924-25 September 1930.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 February 1927-7 April 1928.

districts in China. Given Canadian law and policy and, to some extent, their own hopes of retirement in China, most Vancouver Chinese lived a bachelor existence in Canada while supporting their families in the home districts. District associations were particularly useful in this respect. But concern with one's home district also included interest in home district modernization projects, such as schools and railroads, and concern about home district politics. To these concerns Vancouver Chinese also addressed themselves and their contributions, sometimes through district associations and sometimes through ad hoc committees.

Thus, in terms of political organizations, Vancouver's Chinatown had a spectrum in this period that ranged from the most traditionally Chinese clan and district associations to the CBA, which was a late nineteenth century creation common to many overseas Chinese communities — and on to reading rooms and political parties, both of the latter being early twentieth century creations in China and overseas. Among these political parties was one, the Cheekongtong, which, by early in the twentieth century, was converting its Canadian version from a secret society into an open welfare association and political party under the name Chinese Freemasons. Finally, there were ad hoc committees, which seem to have been largely twentieth century creations, existing perhaps both in China and abroad.

## II. "Canada" Issues

Turning now to what we can identify as "Canada" influences, let us briefly summarize some of the major events and issues. In 1907 the Anti-Oriental riot in Vancouver caused extensive damage to Chinese and Japanese property. The Chinese responded by withdrawing their services as domestics and closing their shops. When it became possible to do so, they presented a claim for damages to the Canadian government, which was settled in a generally satisfying way.<sup>20</sup> Despite the settlement and the subsequent establishment of a Chinese consulate in Vancouver, the aftermath of the 1907 riot brought home to the Chinese as never before the contrast between the Japanese, whom many white Canadians resented but necessarily respected because of the power of Japan, and their own position as immigrants from a largely powerless country. Japan signed a "Gentlemen's Agreement" with Canada by which the Japanese government avoided humiliation by voluntarily restricting the number of Japanese emigrating to Canada; Chinese immigrants continued to be controlled by Canadian restraints and to pay the \$500 headtax.

<sup>20</sup> Morton, pp. 211-13.

During World War I the small Canadian-born generation began to appear. Indeed, almost all of the first group of Canadian-born Chinese were found in Victoria and Vancouver, the residence of most of the Chinese merchants wealthy enough to afford to have their families with them in Canada. Although not allowed the vote, the Canadian-born Chinese of Vancouver and Victoria were allowed to volunteer for military service and a few hundred did indeed serve in Europe. Briefly, thereafter, there were demands that those who had done so should receive the right to vote, but there was little sustained support for this argument and the Dominion Elections Act of 1920 closed off the possibility.<sup>21</sup>

During the war years, too, there was suspicion in the Canadian government about the implications for the Canadian war effort of political factionalism in the Canadian Chinese communities. China was divided, after 1916, between northern and southern governments. In common with most foreign governments, Canada recognized the northern (Peking) governments, which were usually dominated by one warlord clique or another. There was some question in the minds of Canadian government officials about which Chinese government might support Germany in the European war and which might support the western allies. Accordingly, the wartime office of the Press Censor for Canada paid great attention to the communications of the Chinese political organizations in Vancouver, even to intercepting their most routine telegrams and cable communications.<sup>22</sup>

As time went on the suspicions of at least some Canadian officials fell more upon the Kuomintang than either of the other two parties. In 1915-16 when Yuan Shikai, whose government Canada recognized, attempted to make himself emperor, the KMT in Canada, supporters of Yuan's enemy, Sun Yat-sen, had organized an expeditionary force of Canadian Chinese to stop him.<sup>23</sup> At that time and for years afterward, Sun Yat-sen's supporters had maintained flying schools at Esquimalt, B.C., and elsewhere in western Canada.<sup>24</sup> After Yuan's death and the north-south split of 1916, the KMT was in an even more vulnerable position with respect

<sup>21</sup> *Victoria Times*, 26 September 1919; *Chinese Times*, 27 September 1919; *Commons Debates*, 26 September 1919, pp. 661-81; Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of Japanese Canadians* (Toronto, 1976), p. 105; *Victoria Colonist*, 5, 11 March 1921.

<sup>22</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Records of the Department of Secretary of State, Chief Press Censor, RG 6, E 1.

<sup>23</sup> Lee Tung-hai, pp. 308 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Chen Kwong Min, p. 477; Public Archives of Canada, External Affairs, RG 25, Annual Registers, 1922; *Chinese Times*, 12 May 1922.

to the Canadian government. Since Canada recognized the northern government, the Chinese consulate in Vancouver was staffed by representatives of that government, who cautiously encouraged the view that the KMT was not to be trusted.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, although all Chinese in Canada were southerners by region of origin, the southern government was Sun Yat-sen's, and hence associated with the KMT. Therefore the Freemasons and the Constitutionists frequently took a pro-"northern government" stance. Culminating all of this was the murder in Victoria in 1918 of a former cabinet member of the northern government, Tang Hualong. Although the murder was not formally charged against the KMT, the widespread suppositions of KMT implication were sufficient (the intercepted cablegrams certainly were not) to convince the Canadian government that the KMT was a dangerous left-wing organization. In the fall of 1918 the KMT and the radical Chinese Labour Party (Zhonghua Gongtang), which was associated with the KMT, were declared illegal and remained so for a period of about six months.<sup>26</sup>

One major "Canadian" issue in any part of the period 1900-1947 was bound to be employment in the white sector of the economy. Unlike most of the rest of Canada, where the Chinese were almost entirely in the laundry and restaurant businesses, the Chinese of British Columbia and Vancouver were rather extensively involved in the extractive industries of that province. Sometimes the logging crews, cannery teams, sawmill or shingle mill workers would be entirely Chinese. On other occasions, however, Chinese worked alongside white labour. Since Chinese labour was often paid less for the same jobs, this led to the formation of Chinese labour unions seeking equal treatment in this and in other ways.<sup>27</sup> Chinese trade associations also sprang up in Vancouver as the Chinese moved into new occupations, especially after 1911. Thus, for example, when the city government attempted to tax Chinese produce hawkers at higher rates

<sup>25</sup> Details of the relationships between the consuls and the local Chinese political parties are found in the *Chinese Times*, 1914-1918, especially issues of 1917-1918. For the representations of the Vancouver Chinese consul to municipal and federal authorities, see Public Archives of Canada, China. Consulate, Vancouver, B.C., Letterbook, 1915-1915. MG 10, C1. The original of the letterbook is in the Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary. Another copy is available at the UBC Special Collections Division. See also Public Archives of Canada, Chief Press Censor, volume 86, file 246-1/246-2, Sherwood to Chambers, 27 September 1918.

<sup>26</sup> Lee Tung-hai, pp. 315-18. Compare the account in Chen Kwong Min, pp. 424-25. See also Public Archives of Canada, Governor-General, RG 7, G 21, volume 239, file 348A and Chief Press Censor, volume 86, file 246-1/246-2, Report of Special Chinese Operator # 220, September 1918.

<sup>27</sup> *Chinese Times*, 28 March, 13 April, 8 June 1918; *ibid.*, 5, 7, 11 March, 1, 9, 10, 26 April, 16 July 1919.

than non-Chinese hawkers, on the presumption that they earned more, the Chinese organized an association and withdrew their services.<sup>28</sup> When white farmers and produce dealers resisted further Chinese advances into those areas of activity, the Chinese organized still more associations. By 1937, when the well-publicized "Potato War" took place on the bridges between Vancouver and Richmond and in the newspapers, there were five Chinese trade organizations that dealt with one or another aspect of the produce business.<sup>29</sup> The methods used by all the Chinese trade associations were those of strike and boycott — methods that had proved their effectiveness recently in China and were also applicable to, and culturally a part of, the Canadian scene.

In 1923, after several months of agitation, particularly from British Columbia, the Canadian Parliament passed a Chinese Immigration Act which was, in fact, an exclusion law, since it effectively cut off any further Chinese immigration to Canada. From that date until repeal of the measure in 1947, no more than two dozen new Chinese immigrants entered the country.

The Chinese of Vancouver, like those elsewhere in the country, tried to oppose the bill before it became law. In September the revived Chinese Labour Party and its affiliated bodies, the Chinese Shingle Workers Federation and the Chinese Produce Sellers Group, presented a strong five-point statement about the problems dealt with in the bill. The statement argued that: (1) Chinese labourers in Canada should have unrestricted opportunity to visit their homeland with the right of return on an open-ended basis, not the existing two-year limit; (2) Chinese immigration should be governed by a Gentlemen's Agreement similar to Japanese immigration; (3) all Chinese presently in Canada and those to come in the future should have the right to have their families with them; (4) the humiliating health examination given to steerage-class passengers at Vancouver should be abolished; (5) Chinese immigrants should have the right to hold any job they wished.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 July, 9 October, 11 November, 17 November 1919 ff; *ibid.*, 14 January 1915; *ibid.*, 12 December 1918; *ibid.*, 30 January 1920; *ibid.*, 11 September 1923; Vancouver City Archives, City Clerk's Incoming Correspondence, RG A1, volume 69; Copy of a Resolution Passed by the Council of the City of Vancouver on 13 August 1918.

<sup>29</sup> *Chinese Times*, 8, 29 January, 24 February, 1-9 March 1937; *Vancouver Province*, 24 October, 2-4 November 1936; *ibid.*, 24 February, 5, 9, 22, 29 March, 29 May, 1 June 1937; *Vancouver Sun*, 7 November 1936; *ibid.*, 17 February, 12 March 1937. The activities of Chinese agricultural associations are recorded in the *Chinese Times*, issues of 1924-1926, 1928, 1930 and 1937.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8 September 1922.

Shortly thereafter, a Vancouver study group, headed by the scholarly Seto Ying-shek, came forth with a four-point proposal: (1) the present law with its headtax and other restrictions should be abolished; (2) if all other countries' laws prohibited labourer immigration it would be acceptable for Canada to do so; (3) Chinese already in Canada should have the same rights as other foreign residents; (4) Chinese already in Canada but lacking headtax certificates should be allowed to remain.<sup>31</sup>

By the time the Commons was considering the bill, Chinese communities across the country were organizing to oppose it. The Vancouver committee was probably the most elaborate. It had twenty-four executives and an executive committee of sixty-four, thereby assuring associational and other interest representation. Under this there were eight fund-raising teams. Theatrical performances were one means of raising funds. Another was assessment of each business firm and each member of the community.<sup>32</sup>

A national federation of local organizations, the Chinese Association of Canada, was created, with its headquarters in Toronto. Strangely enough, despite its status as the largest, Vancouver's Chinatown had no representation on the federal committee, the B.C. representative being Joseph Hope (Lau Kwong-joo) of Victoria.<sup>33</sup> And despite the previous attempts of the Vancouver CBA to assert a claim to be a national CBA for all of Canada, the leadership, in the 1923 crisis, in fact, rested with Toronto's Chinese community. Toronto's location and the personal links of Toronto Chinese leaders with white persons of influence were decisive reasons for this.

As it turned out, the Chinese were late in getting organized and their friends were not numerous or influential enough to make a difference. Their strongest argument was that exclusionist legislation would hamper Canadian trade with China. Other Chinese arguments pointed out that the Chinese had helped build the railroad that had united the Canadians, or asked rhetorically how Canadian missionaries could preach their religion of love in China while Canadians in Canada treated the Chinese in unloving ways.<sup>34</sup> None of these arguments had any effect. Some details of the bill were modified in the Senate but the essential exclusionist features

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 January 1923.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 March, 19, 23 April, 7, 10, 15, 28 May 1923.

<sup>33</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Immigration, RG 76, File 827821, Part 9, Chinese Association of Canada to King, 12 July 1923.

<sup>34</sup> *Chinese Times*, 31 January, 2 April, 22 May 1923; *Victoria Times*, 29 January 1923.

remained in the Act that was passed. Chinese immigration to Canada was now to be closed off for the next quarter-century.

Once the struggle against the immigration bill was over, the Chinese of Vancouver and Victoria turned their attention to other matters. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s the education of the small Canadian-born generation was a subject of considerable concern. An attempt had been made in 1922 by the Victoria School Board to segregate all Chinese students in that city. This was met by a determined boycott and alternative school program organized by parents and the Victoria CBA. After a year's effort, the boycott forced the city to back down. In Vancouver, although there was talk of segregation, very little took place. Most school principals did not consider it necessary and the CBA was able to negotiate non-implementation of such proposals.<sup>35</sup> In both cities, however, there was continuing concern in Chinatown with the "other side" of Chinese Canadian education — the after-school "Chinese" school. Such schools proliferated wildly in Vancouver during the 1920s and the 1930s. At one point there were eleven of them, despite a small and slowly growing student-age population. Partly that was an expression of differences in educational and political philosophy. Much of it, however, reflected perceived need. As long as most Chinese Canadians in Vancouver would have only limited opportunities in white Canadian society it was essential that they have a good grounding in Chinese language, for business reasons.

As the Sino-Japanese War that began in 1937 merged into the Pacific War of 1941 to 1945, Vancouver's Chinese — like those elsewhere in Canada — found themselves bearing a double load: supporting both China's resistance to Japan and Canada's war in Europe and in Asia. As China and Canada became allies against Japan, popular attitudes among white Canadians towards China and towards Chinese Canadians improved markedly. Five hundred Chinese Canadians served in the Canadian Armed Forces. When the war ended, the willingness and ability of Chinese Canadians to prove their attachment to Canada, and the changes in white Canadian attitudes, as well as other, more international influences, combined to open the way for the repeal of the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act (or "exclusion law"), and for the enfranchisement of British Columbia's Chinese.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Lee Tung-hai, pp. 357-58; *Chinese Times*, 20 October 1921; *ibid.*, 4 September 1923; Joseph Hope (Lau Kwong-joo), "Weifou Huaqiao sanian fendou shiji," (A history of 30 years of struggle by the Victoria Chinese), *Jianada Weiduoli Zhonghua Huiguan . . . tekan*, p. 6; *Victoria Times*, 12, 17, 21 October, 2 November 1922; *ibid.*, 8, 30 January 1923.



But it required several campaigns between 1946 and 1949 to bring about these changes. Although various organizations and methods were involved, once again, as in 1923, the basic technique was to use the ad hoc committee. In the case of the repeal of the Immigration Act, the most effective effort, as in 1923, was mounted in Toronto. This time, however, as time went on there was more and more white Canadian involvement in the Toronto committee's efforts, to the point where, in the end, that committee was more white than it was Chinese.<sup>37</sup> The other major effort to repeal the Immigration Act came from Vancouver, mostly in the form of a one-man effort by Foon Sien to bombard government offices with letters and the white Canadian public with speeches. Once the Immigration Act was repealed (1947) and replaced by a more humane Chinese immigration policy, the Chinese of Vancouver could turn their attention to the question of the franchise. One of the leaders was Foon Sien. Another was a young Chinese Protestant minister. Delegations that lobbied in Victoria and sought the support of white groups were cross sections of B.C.'s middle class Chinese: small businessmen, professionals and housewives. By 1947 B.C.'s Chinese had the provincial and federal vote and, two years thereafter, the municipal vote as well.<sup>38</sup>

If we summarize the kinds of "Canadian" issues faced by the Chinese we may think of them as threefold: (1) specific instances of discrimination. Here one would include the 1907 riot, unequal treatment in the white economic sector, and questions of equal access to white-operated public schools. (2) the immigration issue. This was a consistent political problem from 1900 to 1947, but it reached crisis proportions on two occasions, 1923 and 1946-47. (3) the franchise issue. Again, the issue was present throughout the period. However, it only rarely became of importance in Chinese politics.

The Chinese way of dealing with the first category of issues — that is, specific instances of discrimination — depended in part on the kind of issue. Boycotts and strikes were the most common methods, but the leading organization might be a trade association or it might be the CBA. For example, in the case of persistent legislation and threatened enforcement of a provincial law that would prevent white women from working as

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<sup>36</sup> Hope, "Weifou Huaqiao sanian fendou shiji," p. 9; Lee Tung-hai, pp. 446-47; Chen Kwong Min, p. 416.

<sup>37</sup> Chen Kwong Min, pp. 414-15; Lee Tong-hai, p. 359; *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 30 November 1946.

<sup>38</sup> Carol F. Lee, "The Road to Enfranchisement: Chinese and Japanese in British Columbia," *BC Studies*, 30 (1976).

waitresses in Chinese-owned restaurants, it was the CBA that regularly (and successfully) negotiated non-enforcement of the law.<sup>39</sup> After 1908, when the Vancouver Chinese consulate was established, its representatives were usually included in such negotiations; but given China's weak and chaotic state, its representatives could be expected to have only limited effectiveness, and that was indeed the case.

The second category of issues, immigration problems, did not lead to strikes and boycotts. Such issues were routinely handled by CBA committee negotiators (or petitioners), with consulate backing. When immigration issues reached a point of crisis, the ad hoc committee was the method used. Both ad hoc committees and CBA petitioning committees made use, among other methods, of personal relationships with white officials. In this connection, it is particularly important to note the continuing theme of the intervention in all kinds of "Canada-related" issues of the broker-type negotiator. This might be a Chinese whose English was good, who had had some professional education or training, and who had several white contacts. He might often be a court or customs interpreter; or the "broker" might be a friendly white person, most often a Chinatown missionary. On issues where linguistic and cultural skills as related to white Canadian society were critically important, such people operated as individual negotiators or as key members of negotiating teams. Foon Sien and Joseph Hope are two well-known examples.

Finally, there remains the voting issue, which seems rather puzzling. It is puzzling because, except for one unsuccessful test case of the B.C. Elections Law as far as the Supreme Court of Canada in 1910,<sup>40</sup> the issue of the franchise seems rarely to have been raised by the Chinese themselves. We need not, from this apparent absence of self-assertion, assume an absence of interest. Nor, in speaking of the Chinese political methods — strikes, boycotts and negotiations — do we necessarily have to call these the politics of the disfranchised. Disfranchised they were, but their politics fit Chinese experience, past and present. They also fit the Canadian demographic realities. Even in Vancouver, where there was the largest concentration of Chinese in Canada, their number amounted to no more than 5 percent of that city's population. As long as they were not greatly prosperous and as long as they had few influential affiliations outside their own community, the Chinese could safely be ignored by Vancouver's and

<sup>39</sup> Of numerous references in the *Chinese Times*, see, especially, 27 November, 21 December 1923, 17 November 1925, 25 February, 1 September, 2 October 1928; January-February 1937. See also Lee Tung-hai, p. 359.

<sup>40</sup> Morris Davis and Joseph Krauter, *The Other Canadians* (Toronto, 1971), p. 64.

British Columbia's politicians. Even if possessed of the vote they could not thereby have changed immigration policies between 1900 and 1923 or prevented the passage of the 1923 "exclusion law." That could only have been done with the help of white votes. Most white Canadians — in Vancouver or elsewhere — were simply unconcerned with the Chinese. Only when some white concern developed in the 1940s — concern about the hitherto unjust and inequitable treatment of the Chinese — was it worthwhile even talking about the franchise.

Thus, bitterly ironic though it was, the Chinese earned, through their efforts in World War II, the repeal of the "exclusion law" and the reinstatement of the franchise; but, because of the small size of the Chinese population, what they had earned could be achieved only by its being given to them.

Finally, we have seen that political unity among the Chinese in Canada, despite occasional white assumptions of a Chinese monolith, was the rarest of commodities. There was never a universally recognized national organization that could outlast an immediate crisis. Small wonder; even within individual communities, like Vancouver's, unity was rare. It was only crises — whether originating in China or in Canada — that produced unity. When those were gone, the Chinese reverted to disunity and factionalism.