

Enclosure.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable William Lee, Baron Plunket, K.C.M.G., Governor of the Dominion of New Zealand.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

This humble petition of the undersigned Chinese residents of the Dominion of New Zealand sheweth:—

1. That your petitioners comprise the great majority of the Chinese residents of the Dominion aforesaid, and some of them are naturalised subjects of His Majesty and Christians.
2. That the Chinese residents of the Dominion are peaceful, hardworking, and law-abiding. The proportion of law-breakers among them is considerably smaller than among European residents, and practically all offences committed by them are of a minor character.
3. That before being admitted to the Dominion each of your petitioners paid the poll-tax, as required by law.
4. That your petitioners earn their living honestly as miners, market-gardeners, laundrymen, and shopkeepers, and more than two hundred have become naturalised.
5. That during the session of the General Assembly of New Zealand held in 1907, a Bill intituled "An Act to amend 'The Chinese Immigrants Act, 1881,'" was passed, but reserved by Your Excellency for the signification of His Majesty's pleasure thereon.
6. That your petitioners respectfully submit that the said Bill, having been introduced and passed at the close of an unusually long session of the General Assembly of New Zealand, was not fully and adequately considered and discussed; that your petitioners had no knowledge of the introduction of the said Bill until considerable progress had been made with it, and were afforded neither time nor opportunity for placing their protest fairly before Parliament.
7. That such Bill proposes to enact as follows:—
 - (a.) "It shall not be lawful for any Chinese to land in New Zealand until it has been proved to the satisfaction of the Collector or other principal officer of Customs at some port in New Zealand that such Chinese is able to read a printed passage of not less than one hundred words of the English language, selected at the discretion of such Collector or principal officer: Provided that any Chinese who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Collector or principal officer shall have the right to appeal to a Magistrate, who shall administer such further test in reading the English language as he thinks fit, and the decision of the Magistrate shall be final.
 - (b.) "Any master of a ship who lands or permits to land in New Zealand any Chinese who has not fulfilled the requirements of this Act shall be liable to the same penalties, and may be dealt with in the same manner as if he had landed or attempted to land without payment having been made as provided by section five of the principal Act."
8. That under "The Chinese Immigrants Act, 1881," every Chinese immigrant to New Zealand was subjected to a poll-tax of £10, in addition to which the proportion of Chinese immigrants travelling on any one ship was fixed at one for every 10 tons of registered tonnage.
9. That by an amending Act of 1888 the proportion of Chinese immigrants per ship was further limited to one for every 100 tons of registered tonnage. As if all this was not sufficiently severe, the General Assembly of New Zealand in 1896 passed a Bill intituled "The Asiatic Restriction Act," the chief objects of which were to raise the poll-tax to £100, to limit the proportion of immigrants to one for every 200 tons of registered tonnage, and to prohibit the naturalisation of Chinese. The measure was reserved, however, by His Excellency Lord Glasgow for the signification of Her late Majesty's pleasure thereon, and it never became law.
10. That when "The Asiatic Restriction Act, 1896," had been reserved as aforesaid, the General Assembly of New Zealand passed "The Chinese Immigrants Act, 1896," the object of which was to increase the poll-tax to £100 and to limit the number of Chinese passengers by any one ship to one for every 200 tons of registered tonnage. That Act was intended as a temporary measure pending the assent of Her late Majesty to the Bill which had been reserved, but, as Her late Majesty withheld her assent from the latter, the said Act of 1896 is still in force.
11. That when the Colonial Premiers met the Secretary of State for the Colonies in Conference on the occasion of Her late Majesty's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, the question of alien immigration into the British colonies was dealt with exhaustively. The Secretary of State for the Colonies submitted a draft measure to the Conference of Premiers for submission to their respective Parliaments, with a view, as far as possible, to the adoption of uniform legislation in this connection throughout the Empire. This measure, as adopted by the Premiers, omitted all reference to immigrants of any particular nationality; it contained no reference to the question of naturalisation, and it proposed a uniform writing test for immigrants "in some language of Europe." The evident policy of the measure was to deal with a subject admittedly difficult in the least offensive manner possible in the circumstances, and to avoid undue harshness towards the people of any particular nation. "The Immigration Restriction Act, 1899," represents the measure submitted to the Premiers by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, as the same was adopted by the Parliament of New Zealand. Section 21 of the Act reads as follows: "Nothing in this Act contained shall apply to Chinese within the meaning of 'The Chinese Immigrants Act, 1891,' but all such Chinese shall continue to be subject to the Act as if this Act had not been passed." This clause was in the Bill as it was first submitted to the House of Representatives, and it clearly shows that the Conference of Premiers and the Parliament of New Zealand considered that, inasmuch as Chinese immigrants were already subject to a poll-tax of £100 and to drastic limitations on the number travelling by any one ship, it was neither desirable nor equitable that they should also be made amenable to a writing test.