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# Argument

*advanced by*

**Native Sons of British Columbia**

**In Opposition to  
Granting  
of  
Oriental Franchise**



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Excerpt from the pamphlet, "Argument advanced by Native Sons of BC"  
that opposed granting the Oriental franchise, 1932

# *Argument . . . .*

Canadians have been watching with considerable trepidation the World arming for a recurrence of an era of bloodshed. The Dominion Government, fearful of the future, has voted what to a small population such as ours must be regarded as a considerable sum for defence of this country. In other countries new concepts of government foreign to our ideals of Democracy, and which are based on force are curtailing and brutally stamping out personal liberty and the rights and inheritance of peoples.

In such a World—a World gone mad—is it not time for Canadians to stop and carefully consider their future; to maintain a firm hold upon realities, and to stand unitedly to maintain that individual freedom that has constructed the democratic institutions that we enjoy?

Is the time ripe for us to experiment; to lower the guard that we kept up in more tranquil times? We think that you will agree that it is not.

Yet, today, we have some of our own people, advocating what must be considered only as a most dangerous expedient—the enfranchisement of Orientals: Urging, counselling and assisting the endeavors of peoples whose fundamental ideals, whose outlook on life, whose traditions and whose economic concepts are antagonistic to our own appreciation of a democratic state.

This is no time to even consider such an enlargement of our most sacred privilege as free citizens of the Dominion of Canada. Native Sons of British Columbia are unequivocally opposed to extending the franchise to the Asiatic races, and they call upon every thinking Canadian to join with them in impressing the Dominion Government and the Parliament of Canada the terrible risk such enlargement of citizenship would mean. We believe that it is incumbent upon us, the sons of the pioneers of this Western country to seek to arouse the public to the full portent of this request to share in our heritage.

Many of us can well remember the days when the Orientals—then comparatively few in number—were our servants; we saw them leave those humble domestic and manual pursuits in which they were engaged and become the competitors of our farmers; then, gradually they entered into trade and the business occupations of our urban life, and invaded the professions. Once our servants, now our competitors in industrial occupations and commercial and economic spheres—today they are demanding full citizenship—give it to them and tomorrow they will be our masters.

This is no idle, biased prediction born of prejudice—it is the story so often repeated in the history of a dozen lands. You all remember how the Danes won Britain. They edged in gradually; the price—their promised full price for armed assistance against the enemy of the land—was a small plot of earth that could be enclosed within a bullock hide. You know the result.

Asiatic peoples have many admirable qualities. We admire them for those qualities. We give and are willing to give to them the full measure of the protection of our laws—but we do most strenuously oppose giving them the right to participate in the making of those laws.

The plea is being made that Asiatics who were born within Canada have the right, by the accident of birth, to enjoy the franchise upon attainment of the full age of twenty-one. They have been educated in our schools, have the veneer and polish of our Western culture, and in the

Shintoism is the official religion—or philosophy—of Japan. Buddhism is also largely the cult of a great section of the people of the Island Empire. When the advocates of Buddhism brought the teachings of that prophet to Japan it was found advisable to conform to the spiritual doctrines and concepts of the natives, to the extent that Japanese Buddhism also regards the Mikado as the mortal head of the theology of Buddha.

Mr. D. Goh, eminent Japanese authority, and at one time a member of the Japanese Consulate in London, writing on Shintoism, says:

“Whilst all other religious beliefs are theoretically distinct from political usage and institutions, Shinto embraces the Imperial dynasty of Japan as part of its Godhead, if such a term may be used in this connection.”

If on no other ground, Canadians must reject the demand for full rights of participating in the government of this country to a people whose religious philosophy so definitely associates them with the Emperor of a foreign power. Further Mr. Goh says:

“It is my opinion, therefore, that any religion may be established in Japan, provided it does not interfere with the practice of that filial and loyal piety which the State demands.”

Can a people who have been reared under such direct and implicit acknowledgment of the divinity of the Imperial person make such loyal Canadians as to uphold the Dominion against that Prince? It is hardly possible, especially when to inculcate those very principles, the Japanese maintain their own school system in British Columbia. Follow the Japanese children from our own schools each afternoon, and you will find them go directly to the Japanese schools, where Japanese ethics, Japanese traditions and Japanese culture is taught to those who aspire to control the destinies of Canada.

Again, have the Oriental races domiciled in Canada established their right to the sacred partnership privileges that they demand? Have they conformed in all respects with our laws? Have they demonstrated that as peoples they can be assimilated?

The records of public offices must be studied to definitely establish these facts; but common knowledge testifies to the contrary. It is not sufficient that those Orientals who have enjoyed the advantage of our educational facilities ambitiously demand the vote. Not the worthiness of Japanese alone, but of all Asiatic races must be clearly proven before such a privilege can be considered. Make no mistake, discrimination can not be shown in favour of one Oriental race to the disadvantage of others. If the Japanese are admitted to full citizenship, then the bars must be lowered to the Chinese, the Koreans, the Manchukaoukans, the Burmese, the peoples of India and all others who today are here, or who in future may come to these shores.

It is incumbent, therefore, for us to regard the habits of life, the observance of laws, the moral, religious and political attitudes of all Asiatic races before we decide to take such a drastic step as is being advocated.

Who that has any acquaintanceship whatever with the Chinese customs and manner of life—not in China, but in the Oriental quarters of our own Canadian communities—or who has witnessed the attitude of passive disregard for Canadian laws on the part of Orientals will say that these people can be readily assimilated? Chinese who have spent forty years within our borders, are today just as Chinese as when they came from their own land. Their traditions, their mental reactions, their habits and their secret contempt for ways that are not their own definitely mark them as unfitted to adopt the responsibilities of a democracy such as Canadians cherish.