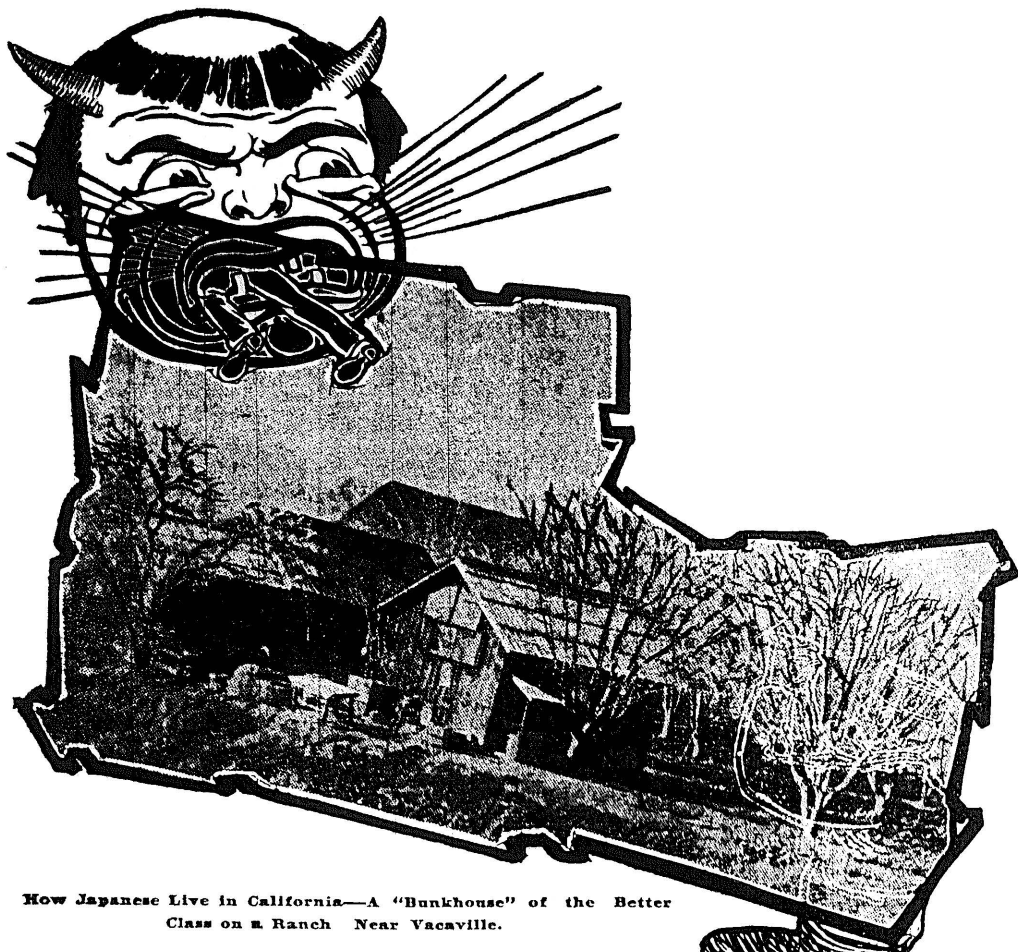


JAPANESE CONTROL THE VACAVILLE LABOR SITUATION



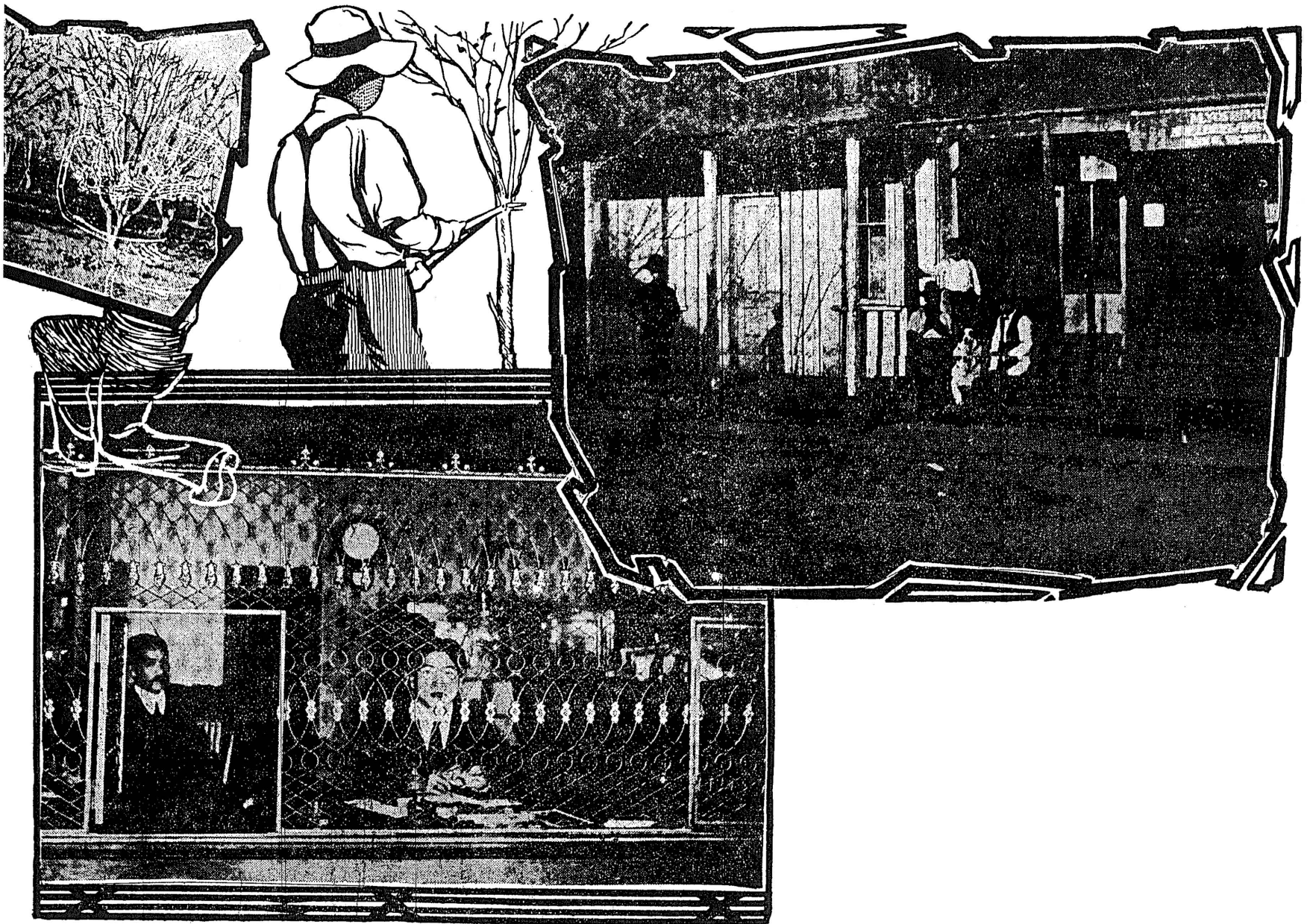
How Japanese Live in California—A "Bunkhouse" of the Better Class on a Ranch Near Vacaville.

BUILDING TRADES COUNCIL WANTS JAPANESE EXCLUDED.

AT a largely attended meeting of the Building Trades Council held last Thursday evening, the subject of Japanese invasion was discussed and the following resolution introduced by Secretary O. A. Tveitmoe was on motion unanimously carried, adopted by the Council: "Resolved, That we again renew our emphatic protest against the national policy, laws and treaties which allow the Japanese to enter our ports in unlimited numbers to the great detriment of our citizenship, our standard of living, and the progress of American civilization, and be it further

"Resolved, That we do hereby heartily indorse the action of the California State Legislature which directed the Governor to call this important question to the attention of the President of the United States, with the urgent request and demand to the State Department and Congress, that existing treaties be so amended and such laws enacted as will forever effectually exclude the undesirable and dangerous emigrants from the Mikako's empire from our country, in a like manner as those that have been successfully invoked against the immigration of Chinese, and be it further

"Resolved, That copies of this resolution be forwarded to President Theodore Roosevelt, and Secretary of State John Hay, and our Representatives in Congress."



Japanese Bankers do a thriving business in California. This photograph shows the interior of the Banking-house of F. Murayama, in Vacaville. The man looking through the screen is the cashier. Murayama holds leases on seven ranches near Vacaville.

FRUIT CROP IS NOW IN DANGER

Coolie Workmen Threaten Strike That Will Bring Ruin to Orchardists of Valley Unless Terms Are Granted.

VACAVILLE, March 3.—The Japanese, having insinuated themselves into a position of practical control, are threatening the orchardists of Vacaville with a strike of enormous proportions and far-reaching consequences. With the passage of every day, which brings nearer the fruit harvesting season, the situation grows more acute. Not since the famous "drive" of 1884, when the conflict between the white and Oriental working population had to be quelled by rifles in the hands of the more conservative class of citizens, has public feeling reached such a pitch of bitterness. The situation, in fact, is critical, and a careful canvass of the growers and shippers of the valley fails to reveal a single one of any shade of political belief or grade of financial rating, who does not regard the approaching months with anxiety, if not positive alarm.

The Japanese have an organization which is little short of marvelous, while white laborers and capitalists alike are unorganized. The Japanese make frequent threats and no infrequent use of the boycott, and in every instance so far have brought the recalcitrant ranchers to terms. Instances of violence and bloody scuffles between the white laborer and his little brown-skinned rival are not without precedent in Vacaville, but until recently the Japanese have remained for the most part docile and often servile, after the manner of Chinese. But at last they are beginning to realize their strength. Years of patient planning have put them into the position they coveted, to wit, dictators of the valley. They can do without the white man; the white man cannot immediately do without them.

The success of Japanese arms in the Far East has also tended to make them throw off the mask and assert themselves, and the white ranch-owners and shippers are beginning to realize that in dallying with Asiatic labor they have Orientalized their valley. Driven out the better class of white labor and left themselves at the mercy of the Japanese, with his coolie system, his degraded scale of living and utter unscrupulousness of dealing.

Have the Whip Hand.

There are many diverse opinions as to the proper course to be pursued, but the situation as described is acknowledged by all, even the Japanese themselves admitting that they have the whip hand over their former masters. This is in direct contrast with their deprecatory tactics of former years, and shows that they consider themselves intrenched beyond the fear of white competition. The fruit crop promises to be unprecedentedly great, and the feeling among the farmers is approaching that of panic.

"If we have to pay \$1.50 to \$1.75 for this wretched Jap help," said a prominent fruit grower to-day, "where are we going to get our profits from, or where is the supposed saving in allowing the Orientals to come in here? If they make such demands—and I have reliable information that they are already being made, and at the beginning of the picking season will be universal—how are we going to refuse them? Good white labor will not come in here and compete with the Jap. As we are situated to-day, 50 per cent of the crop would rot if we had to depend on 'hobo help' and 'wagon tramps.' A man with several hundred acres of ripe apricots staring him in the face is not in a position to stop and haggle or argue about the price of a day's work."

Ex-Assemblyman W. S. Killingsworth, whose knowledge of the situa-

tion is intimate, owing to the prominent part he took in debating the labor problem during his term at Sacramento, says:

Lives in Dread.

"I live in dread of this season, and I can form no opinion as to the ultimate outcome. There is no questioning the fact that the Japanese are thoroughly organized and in complete control of the labor proposition here. There is not a town in California which is more desperately Jap-ridden than Vacaville.

"If a people were ever cursed with a class of labor more worthless, more rotten and less to be depended upon than California is with that of the Jap, I have yet to find it in my travels from the Alpine glaciers to the Golden Gate. Until it is supplanted by the white labor now knocking at our doors, asking for admission, showing evidences of a willingness to come and identify itself with us, we will continue to, knuckle to the demands of the Japs, who not only dictate the rate of wages and the length of working hours, but are becoming extensive renters of ranches. It is my opinion that, before another year has passed, the framers and supporters of the Chinese exclusion act will understand what a great mistake was made in not also excluding the Jap. Of the two evils the Chinaman is by far the least.

"I predict that this Japanese interference with our public marts will reach proportions that eventually will be embarrassing to every line of business in the State. It is a well-known fact that in sections where fruit, beets and hops are the principal staple the Japanese invasion is something astounding. The Japs have almost a monopoly as laborers in the industries named. Why? Because they are so constituted that they will live on what the average white laborer throws to his dog."

Are Virtually Slaves.

The reading of Assemblyman Killingsworth's words naturally brings two questions to the reader's mind. First, what is the nature of the Japanese organization referred to, and second, why cannot the white labor from the various parts of the State and from the East be used at once to supplant the intolerable Japanese?

In considering these propositions in their order a few words based on a careful study of the situation in the rural districts in Northern California are necessary.

The Japanese organization differs from anything else to be seen in this country, being based upon the existence of what are practically slave laborers, who leave their destinies entirely in the hands of the Japanese overseer. If the Japanese who are working in the fields and vineyards of California were independent and ambitious individuals, striving for their own advancement, the Japanese question would not exist in the form which it now presents itself. But the fact is that the Japanese laborer, considered individually, is a mere coolie. The rate of wages is of no moment to him. He is not hired by the white ranch owner, he is merely the means whereby the Jap boss fulfills his contract to supply so many days' labor at such a figure. His name even is unknown to the rancher. In Vacaville one may go to any store in the Oriental quarter and buy labor as he would buy sausages. The Jap boss delivers the goods, *i. e.* b., the wagon bound for the ranch. He receipts for the check, and all that is expected of the laboring man is to do as little work thereafter as possible.

If the ranch owner objects, the coolies are called off and he sees his

fruit going to decay. If he offends the Oriental powers that be, he finds himself the victim of a boycott, and the next time he approaches an employment agent he will be told with a grin that "boys all busy to-day," or that his Japship has no time to talk. Eventually, if he succeeds in contracting for a certain number of laborers, but half of them will be forthcoming.

"They do not come out plainly and declare a boycott," said a Vacaville merchant, whose former connection with the fruit-growing industry gives him authority to speak, "for that is not their way of doing things. With a Jap, everything is underhand. They will simply cripple the man they do not like until they bring him to terms. What they want to do is to get the ranch into their own hands. This is the most alarming feature of the situation. More than half of the ranches in this valley are to-day rented by Orientals. Five years ago such a thing was not heard of.

"The most remarkable thing about it is the amount of work which a Jap boss can get out of his men. Take the same fellows who have been loafing around the ranch for months, and let the boss get control, and you will see them working even on moonlight nights. By making trouble on the one hand and offering a good rental on the other hand, the Japanese are tempting rancher after rancher to sign over his interests into their hands."

No Whites Wanted.

Once having rented a ranch, the Japanese boss quickly banishes all the white labor that may have been employed there. There are but two places in the region white men can be seen working for an Asiatic, and in both of these instances the employer is a Chinese.

"White man do very well better than Jap," said one of these remnants of the former Asiatic invasion of Vacaville, when approached on the subject.

Any one at all familiar with fruit growing can tell at a glance in riding through the country which ranches are controlled by white and which by Oriental overseers.

"The Japanese will not thin the fruit, cultivate the ground nor properly prune the trees after he has rented the ranch," is the universal testimony. They go in for immediate results, and if the fruit comes out small and inferior, they are content to cut it and dry it. When the land is deteriorated in value, the owner has to bear the loss, for the renter is at liberty to take over a fresh orchard. The most rigid kind of contracts are now required by experienced fruit

farmers before they will let their holdings to foreigners, with detailed stipulations in regard to the thinning, pruning and cultivating to be done. But no contract has been found which will keep a ranch up which is in Japanese hands.

Even the renter is not an independent agent. He is but another cog in the wheel of the Oriental machine which is being run like a Juggernaut over the fair fields of California, crushing out the American characteristics of their population and converting them into so many suburbs of Tokio and Yokohama. As the day laborer is in the hands of the contractor, the contractor himself is in the hands of the money lender. One self-styled banker in the Asiatic quarter of Vacaville rents twelve ranches through his agents. Another controls no less than twenty through money advanced to the contractors. The entire policy of the Japanese population is thus controlled by a few men who work hand in hand with each other. To offend one Jap is to be at odds with the entire brown population, which, in the country districts, greatly exceeds the white population, and in Vacaville itself is in a proportion of about one to three.

White Labor Objects.

So much for the Japanese organization of which the ex-Assemblyman speaks. The difficulties in the way of introducing American wage-earners have yet to be inquired into.

"When a white man comes here," said a local merchant, "he looks around and sees the bunk-houses studding the fields and wonders if he is in America. If he has the necessary car fare he gets out as fast as possible. No decent white will compete with the Jap. The class of white labor which does come in here is often worse than the Asiatic labor itself. Single men arrive from the city—'hobo help' we call them—and all they want is to earn a few dollars for a drunk."

In this they do not seem to differ from the Japanese, for three unlicensed liquor saloons are running full blast in Japtown, and to them the Jap repairs at the first moment when a nod from his brown-skinned master gives him a night off.

"The difference between a Chink and a Jap," remarked the representative of a well-known packing house the other day, "is this: A Chinese will not help the American because he will not spend his money, preferring to send it home to China. A Jap will spend his money, but he will not spend it at a white man's store if he can help it. There is absolutely noth-

ing in it for the merchant, and the 500 odd Japs who make up the permanent Asiatic population of Vacaville proper bring nothing at all into the avenues of trade. Their money goes eventually back to their native country, just as that of the Chinese does. In addition, some of the white man's money goes with it, for they are actually cutting into the white trade here."

A Growing Evil.

A trip through Japtown will convince anyone of this fact. Extensive laundries, large general merchandise stores and employment agencies elbow each other there. Three billiard saloons are crowded into one block. There is an ice-cream parlor and a bank. Everything which an Oriental heart could wish is on sale, and many things are there which cater to the Occidental appetite. In short, Japtown is a complete little city in itself, enormously large in proportion to the whole community, and built in true Oriental style, so far as the tiny proportions of the living apartments are concerned.

Another thing which stands as a bar between Vacaville and the supply of white labor is the accommodations which are provided by the ranchers. The insidious virus of Orientalism has entered into their ideas of what constitutes decent board and lodging. "Bunkhouses" are provided for the Japanese help, for the reason that they are necessary in order to secure it, and the man who owns 1000 acres of orchard is very careful not to go counter to the desires of the race which controls the only steady supply of labor—supply of steady labor it cannot be called—which is at hand. But when a white laborer applies for a job and asks where he is to sleep he is too often told that there are innumerable acres of good ground for his mattress and an abundant supply of blue sky for his coverlet. This is not pleasant even in summer, and in winter it is utterly intolerable. Sleeping in blankets does not appeal to an American, especially in a country infested with rattlesnakes. It is the Jap consequently who prunes the orchard in winter and gets the steady work, while the "wagon tramp" and the "hobo" does the picking and cutting when Oriental labor is unable to cope with it. Probably the unsteady, transitory nature of the employment offered has more than anything else to do with the scarcity of good white labor in California fruit-raising sections.

"The trouble is that most of the ranchers are not in a position to offer employment to a white man the year round," continued Assemblyman Killingsworth, when he had outlined the situation as quoted in the foregoing. "A Jap will take a job of pruning in the winter that a white man could not exist on, and decent Americans cannot afford to come here and hire out for a half season. The Jap is slowly but surely crowding out white help, and if the process continues he is going to force it out entirely. Every year more and more ranches are being rented by these allens. Ranchers are every year becoming more and more afraid

to run them themselves, for fear they will not be able to handle the crops without loss. In several instances the Japs have threatened their employers with a boycott at a critical moment. I know what I am talking about, for I ran up against the proposition many years ago. I hired white help—the only kind I could get were fully 50 per cent ex-convicts. I could not handle them, so I made up with the Jap boss. The presence of the Japanese immigrant keeps away the better class of native labor; there is no question about it. The Japs are a fixture here."

Instances of coercion are of frequent occurrence, though the sufferers are usually unwilling, for obvious reasons, to say much about their troubles of this nature. To give an example: One fruit-grower sold his grape crop to a Japanese contractor. A dispute arose about a debt of \$50 which the Jap owed him. He attempted to collect it, but was given to understand that if he did so the "boys" would be too tired to work for him any longer.

Scared Out of His Ranch.

Another case of recent occurrence was on a ranch some distance up what is known as the "Canyon road." The owner was told that he would have to pay \$1.50 instead of \$1 for Japanese labor after the beginning of the picking season, and that later in the year it would be advanced to \$1.75 a day. This threat was unlike the usual mode of Asiatic procedure, but it accomplished its object. Rather than run the risk of a strike, the owner, who is located in a somewhat remote section of the valley, where labor is naturally more difficult to obtain, let his acres to his Japanese overseer. He will soon have the pleasure of seeing the largest crop in the history of the valley harvested by men who have thus engineered him out of the extra profits which he might otherwise have received from nature's phenomenal bounty. But he will live undisturbed by the dread of seeing his fruit rot because the "boys" are too busy to work for him.

Another case showing the growing aggressiveness of the brown laborer was related:

"One day the Japs came to me and said that my boss was no much good' and that they could not work under him any more," the informant declared. "I thought that the overseer had done something to make himself offensive and substituted another, but the Japs absolutely refused to work under a white man. They had taken a notion that they would like to work without any boss at all, and I actually had to allow them to finish the job under those conditions."

Sit Down to Work.

Another rancher was surprised one day to see his Asiatic employees sitting around the fields on stools, and promptly ordered them to get up and go to work. They insisted that they could not pick grapes standing up. The end was that, rather than have his crop ruined by the early rains of last fall, he allowed them to bring their stools into the vineyard—a proceeding theretofore unheard of in the valley.

LABOR BODIES TO TAKE ACTION

Mass Meetings of Unions Will Be Called to Pro- test Against Japanese

THE San Francisco Labor Council intended to take up the question of the Japanese invasion at the meeting held last evening, and a strong resolution on the subject was to be adopted, but a communication from the Stationary Firemen's Union calling for action on the part of the council changed the programme, and the council decided to defer the matter for one week in order to present full data with the resolution to be submitted at the next meeting. The communication follows:

"The following resolution was unanimously adopted at the regular meeting of Local Union, No. 86. International Brotherhood of Stationary Firemen:

"To the San Francisco Labor Council:

"Whereas, We recognize the prominent part taken by the representatives and members of your honorable body at Sacramento in procuring necessary labor legislation ;and

"Whereas, The Japanese invasion of the labor market of this city and State is a serious menace to the

prosperity, comfort and moral condition of our working people; therefore, be it

"Resolved, That we earnestly request the Labor Council to take such steps as it may deem necessary to promote agitation of this question among the unions of this city and State by resolutions and mass meetings if necessary, for the purpose of strengthening the hands of our representatives in Congress and impressing upon them and all other representatives the necessity of passing adequate exclusion laws, and that the agitation be kept up until the object is attained."

The council referred the communication to the law and legislative committee, with instructions to frame a resolution on the subject and submit it to the council at the next meeting.

San Francisco Lodge No. 98, International Association of Machinists, at its last meeting, adopted resolutions indorsing the course of the "San Francisco Chronicle" in its effort to stem the tide of the influx of Japanese, which threatens the welfare of the American mechanics and wage-earners.