

CHAPTER VI.Japanese in Personal Service and Urban Trade

The Japanese on the Pacific Coast entered into commercial activity <sup>soon</sup> ~~only~~ after the beginning of the immigration of laborers in 1885. Almost simultaneously, in San Francisco, Seattle and Los Angeles,<sup>1</sup> various businesses were established. In San Francisco the first store dealing in Japanese curios and art goods was opened in 1886, and within a few years thereafter many similar stores were started in and near Chinatown, marking the beginning of one of the most important branches of business for the Japanese.<sup>2</sup> A laundry and a shoe repairing shop were established in 1890,<sup>3</sup> and shops engaged in tailoring, dressmaking, and suit cleaning opened their doors soon afterward.<sup>4</sup> In the branches of business which met the needs of fellow-countrymen, the first general merchandise store handling Japanese provisions and dry

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1. In other parts of the United States, however, Japanese-operated stores were in existence. The earliest commercial enterprise by Japanese was probably the government-subsidized exhibits of silk, tea, porcelain and pottery wares, etc. at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876. (I. Nitobe, Intercourse between Japan and the United States, pp. 187-188. Cited in Ichihashi, op.cit., p. 116. See also The Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin Shi, p. 247.) Soon after the close of this exposition, several Japanese firms engaged in the sale of imported Japanese goods were established in New York. (The Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin Shi, pp. 1054-1055.)
  2. Ibid., p. 281. An art goods store operated by a Caucasian has already been in business at this time in San Francisco. (Ichihashi, op. cit., p. 116.)
  3. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23, pp. 189 and 197.
  4. Ibid., p. 205.



goods opened in 1886;<sup>5</sup> the first hotel in 1885 and another the next year,<sup>6</sup> and the first barber shop, combined with bath house, in 1890.<sup>7</sup> Across the San Francisco Bay the first florist shop and the first nursery were started in 1885,<sup>8</sup> the first laundry in 1889.<sup>9</sup>

In Seattle a restaurant was started in 1885, a lodging-house in 1886, another restaurant in 1887, and two more in 1888.<sup>10</sup> All these establishments were in "low class" districts, and were designed to cater to the white laboring class. In 1888 a bath house, a laundry, and a general merchandise of Japanese goods were also established.<sup>11</sup>

In Los Angeles the first commercial establishment was a restaurant. It was started in 1885 in the "flop house" area by a group of Japanese who had migrated from San Diego.<sup>12</sup>

The beginning of Japanese business in other cities lagged behind by a few years. In Sacramento, for example, Japanese opened establishments in the eighteen nineties to meet the special needs of their countrymen, most of whom were transient laborers in agricultural pursuits. A lodging house and two hotels were opened in 1891, and four or more in 1895 and 1896. A Japanese provision store, a restaurant serving Japanese meals, and a

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5. The Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin Shi, p.728.

6. Ibid., p. 289.

7. Ibid., pp. 290-291.

8. Ibid., pp. 208-and 282.

9. Ibid., p. 287.

10. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23, p. 273.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p. 224.



barber shop were started in 1893.<sup>13</sup>

In the years 1885-1909,<sup>14</sup> the Japanese commercial activities expanded fast, paralleling the expansion of their farm holdings during the corresponding period. Japanese business establishments in San Francisco in 1904 numbered about 336, and in 1909 about 500. Those in Los Angeles totaled approximately 160 in 1904, and 495 in 1909. In 1905 there were some 216 establishments in Seattle, and 478 in 1909. In Sacramento the number was about 209 in 1909.<sup>15</sup> The growth of Japanese business is attributable to the same two factors that accelerated their progress in farming, viz., (1) the rapid increase of the Japanese population on the Pacific Coast, and (2) their ambition to attain a permanent independent status. The upsurge in the rate of Japanese immigration after 1900 has already been described. A large portion of these new immigrants remained in cities and towns, "where opportunities for social life and employment, and perhaps, for study and observations, appealed more strongly to them."<sup>16</sup> The Immigration Commission was of the opinion that the choice of urban residence was "closely connected with the classes from which the Japanese immigrants have been drawn and the opportunities which have been opened to them as wage-earners in this country.

It is<sup>9</sup> significant fact that of 394 business men who had migrated directly from Japan to this country and whose occupations previous to their emigration from their native land were ascertained, no fewer than 132, or approximately

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13. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250.

14. The year 1909 is taken as a baseline, for the exhaustive study of the Immigration Commission, in the main, concerns itself with this year.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

16. *Millis, op. cit.*, p. 50.



one-third of the entire number, had been engaged in business on their own accounts, 20 had been employed in stores, 54 had been city wage-earners, while 78, practically all from the non wage-earning city classes coming to this country as students, had not been gainfully employed previous to their immigration. Opposed to these persons of the city classes there were 104, 14 of whom had been independent farmers, the other 90, farmers' sons, working on the father's farm before coming to the United States. These data . . . show (1) that a large majority of these men engaged in business in this country came from the cities of Japan, and (2) that a still larger number at home had not belonged to the wage-earning classes.<sup>17</sup>

The increase in the urban population was also accounted for by a "back flow" from non urban employments. In the "back flow" migration were those who voluntarily left jobs on railroads, in lumber mills, canneries, mines, smelters, etc., and those who were released from these nonurban industrial occupations.

Few opportunities have been afforded to the members of this race to rise from the ranks of the lowest to those of the higher-paid laborers. . . . Moreover, the conditions of living which have very generally prevailed have been unsatisfactory from the point of view of the single man, and such that normal family life was impossible.<sup>18</sup>

There were additional "back flow migrants" from agricultural employments.

It was found that few of those who immigrated from cities of Japan remained long at work outside of cities, while many of those coming from the nonwage-earning agricultural classes soon sought work in the cities.<sup>19</sup>

The investigation by the Commission of the Japanese engaged in, or employed in, business shows the relative importance of domestic service, agricultural and railroad employment as their

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17. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23, p. 103.

18. Ibid., p. 104.

19. Ibid.



starting occupation. Of 439 businessmen investigated,<sup>20</sup> only 70, or 15.9 per cent, embarked upon their independent business careers immediately after their arrival; 88, or 20.0 per cent, first worked as farm hands; 49, or 11.2 per cent, as railroad laborers; and 138, or 31.4 per, as domestic servants. Somewhat similar trends were also found among the Japanese who were employed in urban business. Of 424 wage-earners investigated,<sup>21</sup> 26, or 6.1 per cent, started ~~their contemporary careers~~ *as urban workers* after their arrival; 99, or 23.3 per cent, worked first as farm hands; 38, or 9.0 per cent, as railroad workers; and 148, or 34.9 per cent, as household workers.<sup>22</sup>

As already mentioned, however, few occupational fields were available to the Japanese in cities. Few opportunities for employment by white persons other than as domestic servants and in related trades were open to them. In the available branches, working conditions, wages, or type of work were not attractive to them. Employment by Japanese firms was often even worse in many respects. They had seen, on the other hand, that the opportunities presented in the operation of many branches of business were "attractive, and the profits realized by a large percentage of those engaged in them much larger than the earnings of the wage-earning class." It is also true that "the Japanese like to be free from the wage relation. . . . They take great

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20. Some 45 of these men came to the continental United States from Hawaii or from Canada.

21. Of these men 26 came to the continental United States from Hawaii, Canada, or Mexico.

22. Ibid., pp. 104-105.



pride in being independent of that relation."<sup>23</sup> Thus an independent status became highly coveted. The choice of business on their own accounts and its subsequent development was mainly determined by the lack of capital for investment and strong hostility manifested by the dominant group against them. These deterrents tended to confine the Japanese in limited branches of business.

For the sake of clarity, discussion of Japanese commercial activities may be said to have developed along three general lines, viz., (1) the merchandising of goods imported from Japan, (2) personal services or the merchandising of domestic goods to the general public in direct competition with white entrepreneurs, and (3) personal services or the retailing and wholesaling of goods to meet the needs of their countrymen. Each of these general groups had its own historical characteristics, distinct phases of expansion and recession, and significant regional variations.

The activities of immigrant Japanese in foreign trade were limited in the main to the importing of provisions for consumption by fellow-countrymen and of curios and art goods for white patronage. Small in scale, most of them were engaged in the retail sale of their imported goods. Only in later years did some of these firms emerge as those specialized in importing goods to be sold for wholesaling. In other branches of import and export business dealings, for example, with silk or

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23. Ibid., pp. 105-106.



machinery, the immigrant Japanese were insignificant. These activities were concentrated mostly in the eastern part of the United States and carried on by large white corporations or by branches of large commercial firms of Japan. It was the general practice of these Japanese firms to staff their branches with employees who had been trained in Japan and who usually remained aloof from the immigrant communities.

The exact number of Japanese importers of provisions is not known, but the Commission reported that in 1909 a few of the grocery and provision stores in San Francisco were "large supply houses and have much capital invested in their business, most of which is with Japanese outside of San Francisco."<sup>24</sup>

The number of curios and art goods importers engaged entirely in wholesale trade in 1909 is also unknown, but many of the retailers imported their merchandise directly from Japan and operated wholesale trade on the side. The beginning of art goods stores in San Francisco has been noted. By 1904 the number had been increased to 40; by the close of 1909 to 42.<sup>25</sup>

The majority of these carry stocks of goods valued at several thousand dollars, and practically all of the patrons are white persons. The articles sold have never been carried in stock to any great extent by white dealers. In San Francisco there are, however, many Chinese stores of the same type, and the patronage is shared by these two Asiatic races.<sup>26</sup>

In Seattle there were 8 art goods stores in 1900, 6 in 1905, and 12 in 1909. They were located in the shopping districts and patronized exclusively or almost exclusively by white persons.

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24. Ibid., p. 208.

25. Ibid., p. 208.

26. Ibid.



this country from Japan recently, having signed up in Japan and they worked in gangs almost as soon as they got off the boat. They could not speak English so they had to do everything the Japanese boss told them to do. They signed for different gangs and a lot went to work on the railroad and farms and would come back to a hotel in San Francisco during the winter to rest. A lot of times the Japanese boss told them what hotel to stay and got a share of the profits for bringing business to the hotels. There was a lot of exploitation, I think.

I worked in this gang for three years, 1897 to 1900. We went all over the state of California. I picked fruit, dug potatoes, cut beets and chopped wood by San Jose. Once I went to work on the railroad but it was too hard. In the last year I went to work for Mr. Minabe's gang and he was a better contract boss than some others because he did not try to squeeze all earnings from the workers. We made \$24 per month.<sup>1</sup> (Q410)

In the early years, until they had gained a foothold in the labor pool that was dominated by white and Chinese laborers, ~~the~~ underbidding of wages was widely practiced. Once the foothold was established, however, wage scales for the Japanese were energetically boosted.



In Los Angeles there were 7 such stores in 1904 and 15 in 1909. Some of these stores were also in the <sup>neighborhood</sup> shopping districts. A few of these stores were very large. Three of 6 stores investigated by the Commission had "a combined capital of \$120,000 and with 28 employees."

The other 3 had a combined capital of \$13,400 and had only 3 employees. White clerks, because of their superior knowledge of English, were employed in addition to Japanese in 3 of the stores. These were paid \$65, \$54, (2) \$43, \$35, and \$30 per month without board and lodging. Three Japanese women were paid \$43, \$26, and \$22 per month, respectively, without board or lodging. The remaining 22 Japanese employees were paid wages per month as follows: Three \$75, seven \$50, four \$45, five \$40, one \$35, one \$30, and one \$25.<sup>27</sup>

The operation of art goods stores was a lucrative business in terms of the small capital invested. The volume of business of some 84 stores in California, according to the Japanese-American Yearbook, was \$917,250 in 1908-1909, as against \$420,470 invested,<sup>28</sup> or an average intake of \$10,920 as against \$5,006 invested. These stores competed mainly with Chinese shops and only incidentally with some white stores which handled Oriental art goods.

Among the branches of personal service that were started for "American trade," the Japanese made noteworthy progress in the restaurants serving American meals, the laundry business, shoe repairing, cleaning and dyeing, and in some cities the barber trade. The historical events around the growth of Japanese-operated restaurants and laundries in San Francisco are most significant, for the first public agitation against the Japanese

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27. Ibid., pp. 233-234.

28. Ibid., p. 101.



competition in these fields marked a pattern that was later followed elsewhere. As will be seen, in some branches where such agitation was intense, a recession of Japanese holdings took place, or at least their expansion was checked, while in others where it was <sup>less</sup> ineffective, their progress was nonetheless slow.

In San Francisco "the number of Japanese restaurants serving American meals was small previous to 1906. As late as 1904 there were only eight. Following the fire of 1906, however, numerous restaurants were opened in the district of the city devastated by the fire, bringing the total number to more than 30. These were all 'cheap' eating houses charging from '15 cents up' for meals."<sup>29</sup> Most of them were small in scale. The size of these establishments is indicated by that of the five that were investigated by the Commission in 1909.

Two were conducted by the proprietors with one employee in each case, another with two employees, a fourth with three, and only one with as many as eight. The annual gross receipts varied between \$4,000 as a minimum and \$20,000 as a maximum, the monthly rent between \$25 and \$200. The annual profit realized varied between \$600 and \$2,600.<sup>30</sup>

Their competition was mostly with third and fourth class white restaurants in the "low class" districts. Since the most salient rationale used against the Japanese competitors was the working standards of their employees, special attention will be given to the subject. The Commission's report on the 20 persons, all of whom were Japanese, employed in the five restaurants mentioned

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29. Ibid., p. 200.

30. Ibid., p. 201.



above, was as follows:

Two cooks were paid \$50, a third \$35 per month; 3 "cooks' helper," \$35 per month; 8 waiters, \$35; 2 waiters and 1 waitress, \$30; and 1 waiter employed "part time" (ten hours per day), \$15 per month; and 2 dishwashers \$30 and \$25 each, respectively, all with board and lodging. Of those employed full time, 12 worked twelve hours per day and eighty-four hours per week; 7, thirteen hours per day and ninety-one hours per week. . . .

[ The Japanese employees are all provided with lodging in rooms in the rear of the restaurants. In all but one of the establishments investigated the agent of the Commission inspected the lodgings and found them to be adequate and satisfactory, save in one instance, where the room occupied was poorly furnished and inadequately lighted and ventilated. The lodging provided is worth \$4 or more per month.<sup>31</sup>

These wages of Japanese employees were lower than the union scale by some 20 per cent or more. The majority of the employees in white restaurants were not union members and accepted wages lower than the union scale. The significant discrepancy is found only in the fact that the Japanese employees worked much longer hours.

The number of laundries operated by Japanese in San Francisco was reported as 8 for 1904 and as 18 for 1908. All these were "hand laundries" except one. The Commission's investigation of six laundries, excluding the one steam laundry, revealed that

the amount of capital invested . . . varied from \$1,000 to \$3,200, the number of employees from 6 to 37, the amount of gross receipts from \$9,000 to more than \$15,000, the amount of profit realized from \$1,200 to \$6,000 per year.

All the employees in the Japanese-operated laundries were Japanese.

Of the 89 employed in the 6 laundries investigated, 82 were adult males, 7 adult females. They all received

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31. Ibid.



board and lodging in addition to wages. The wages per month for males varied from \$15 to \$50, for females from \$15 to \$21 per month. The median wage for those of the male sex was \$30, the average \$28.90 per month. . . .

These wages are for days varying in length. . . . The hours normally worked were found to be ten per day and sixty per week in one establishment, eleven per day and sixty-six per week in three, eleven and one-half per day and sixty-nine per week in one, and twelve per day and seventy-two per week in the sixth. . . .

As stated above, all of these employees receive board and lodging in addition to wages. The agent of the Commission found the food provided at the laundries investigated to be satisfactory, both from the point of view of quality and quantity. The cost per employee averaged \$8.50 per month at the laundries investigated, and with regard to lodgings, which are in the structures housing the business, each married couple was provided with a separate room, while two or three single men were ordinarily assigned to one room. In one instance, however, all of the men . . . were sheltered in one large room serving as a bunkhouse. . . .

Occasionally, however, the lodgings were deficient in one or more respects. In one case the two rooms were not well cared for, and the ventilation and lighting were poor. In another instance the rooms were crowded and not well cared for. In a third case 10 men were given lodging in three small rooms, which were in disorder, poorly lighted, and poorly ventilated. The lodgings in the remaining three cases were on the whole satisfactory, though in one of these eight single men lived in one large room arranged as a bunkhouse.<sup>32</sup>

Almost all "hand laundries" in San Francisco were operated by either Japanese, Chinese, or French people. The working conditions in the Japanese laundries probably compared favorably with those in the Chinese laundries, although no data are available for the latter. In the French laundries, however, the hours of work per day and per week were somewhat shorter and the wages slightly higher than in the Japanese laundries. The discrepancies become much greater when a comparison is made with the working conditions in the steam laundries, which were operated exclusively

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32. Ibid., p. 190.



by the whites and were thoroughly unionized. The Commission found that the standard work week at the end of the year 1909 was forty-eight hours, and all overtime was paid at the rate of "time and a half." The average wage for the males in the steam laundries investigated by the Commission was \$69.74 per month; that for the females \$44.33 per month; the average monthly wage for both sexes combined was \$53.94.<sup>33</sup>

The Japanese competed directly with the French "hand laundries" and the white steam laundries and charges were made against them that the lower standards for their employees and their willingness to take less profit enabled them to resort to the unfair practice of undercutting prices. It was true, according to the findings of the Commission, that

their prices have been somewhat lower than those of the French laundrymen and these in turn, on certain articles, lower than those of the steam laundrymen. . . . By locating in residence districts, where their shops are convenient for patrons, and by collecting laundry from all parts of the city and doing the work at lower rates than others the Japanese have gained their . . . position.<sup>34</sup>

The white workers, mostly trade union members, also complained of the competition. They argued that the lower wage scale and the longer working hours of the Japanese employees would seriously undermine the higher working standards of the white laborers. Strong support came from the traditionally anti-Oriental organizations, and complaints against Japanese competition were fused into an overall anti-Japanese movement on a large scale.

Early and serious trouble developed during the labor strife

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33. Ibid., p. 191.

34. Ibid., p. 193.



year, 1906, in San Francisco, the center and one of the peak years of anti-Japanese agitation, involving Japanese-operated restaurants. An anti-Japanese organization had protested that many white laborers, including some union members, were patronizing these restaurants. Many trade unions had had laws prohibiting their members from catering to Japanese or Chinese places of business. The complainant

requested the labor organizations to enforce the penalties imposed by their rules for violations of the prohibition mentioned. Among the unions at the meetings of which the members were urged or directed to refrain from patronizing the Japanese restaurants was that of the cooks and waiters. A boycott was kept in force by this organization from October 3 to 24, 1906, and the destruction of property of the proprietors of restaurants by rioters followed peaceable appeals to patrons by the representatives of the organization. The appeal took the form of a label bearing the words "White men and women, patronize your own race."<sup>35</sup>

As a result, some of the proprietors suffered serious loss because of destruction of property or loss of their patrons or both. By 1909 the number of Japanese-conducted restaurants serving American meals in San Francisco had decreased to 17, two of which, however, catered to Japanese patrons.

The agitation against Japanese laundries in San Francisco was more systematic and of long duration. It resulted from the efforts of some Japanese to establish mechanized plants which would create Japanese competition in the operation of the then white-monopolized steam laundries. Fear was expressed that "if their establishments were equipped with modern machinery while maintaining their lower wage scale and working longer hours their competition would become a serious matter."<sup>36</sup> In 1908 the "Anti-Jap Laundry League" was

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35. Ibid., p. 200.

36. Ibid., p. 193.



formed at the direction of the Laundry Drivers' Union, and under it the proprietors of steam laundries, the laundry workers, and the drivers were brought together. Proprietors and employees of French laundries were persuaded to become due-paying affiliates. The drivers had an especial interest in this move, for, because of their compensation on a commission basis, they would feel the Japanese competition directly. These drivers had their routes and collected laundry which they delivered to their respective laundries, paying them for doing the work.

The campaign of the league against the Japanese laundries has been conducted along two general lines-- one directed toward reducing the number of their patrons, the other toward preventing them from obtaining supplies and becoming equipped as steam laundries. To accomplish the former object, to reduce the number of patrons, agents have followed Japanese collectors and reported the names of patrons, who have then been corresponded with and personally visited and an appeal made to them to patronize laundries conducted by and employing the white race.<sup>37</sup>

In case a same customer was reported patronizing a Japanese laundry for the second time, a much stronger letter was sent to him.

Billboard advertising, making an appeal along the same lines, has also been resorted to, while the cooperation of organized bodies, and especially trade unions, has been sought. At the same time the league has been active in preventing the granting of necessary permits to Japanese to operate steam laundries, and by appeals or by threat of boycott the cooperation of some of the supply men has been gained, with the result that difficulty has been experienced by some of the Japanese proprietors in securing supplies needed.<sup>38</sup>

Japanese interests in the laundry trade were injured by

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37. Ibid., p. 194.

38. Ibid., pp. 196-197. One of the billboard posters mentioned here, read:

Foolish woman!  
Spending your man's  
Earnings on Japs.  
Be fair, patronize  
Your Own.  
We support you.



organized hostility, and not until anti-Japanese agitation abated, though temporarily, during World War I could they make a noticeable recovery, although the business remained nominally profitable in spite of the difficulties.

In Seattle, in comparison, the Japanese were able to make better progress in these branches of business where they competed with the whites, although some sporadic periods of opposition occurred. As will be seen later, this progress was probably accounted greatly by the fact that Seattle was a comparatively new city, its population having begun to grow rapidly only since the Alaskan gold rush and the establishment of direct steamship line connections with the Orient and elsewhere, and the trade union movement had not yet gained its strong foothold. The number of the Japanese restaurants serving American meals had increased to 10 by 1900, 20 by 1905, and 36 by 1909. "Many of ~~gm~~ them are small, having a capital of from \$1,000 to \$4,000 invested and with seating capacities for from 35 to 60 or 70 persons. Some . . . are located near the poorer shopping districts, others near industrial establishments."<sup>39</sup> Most served meals ranging in price from 10 to 15 cents principally to non-Japanese patrons. Of 9 of these restaurants investigated by the Immigration Commission in 1909, one had 12 employees, two 8 employees, three 6 employees, one 5 employees, two 2 employees or less.<sup>40</sup> The wages of these workers were similar to those received by workers in the Japanese restaurants in San Francisco, although

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39. *Ibid.*, p. 283.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 383.



considerably lower than those received by white employees in the non-Japanese restaurants.<sup>41</sup> Annual net profits of these 9 restaurants ranged from \$5,400 and \$4,800 each for the two largest, respectively, to \$540 and \$570 for the two smallest.<sup>42</sup> Their competition was with "cheap" restaurants of the "quick-lunch" variety. The Japanese had advantages in the low wages they paid their employees and the smaller profits with which they were satisfied. There was some agitation against the Japanese restaurants, and many of the unions resolved that their members should not patronize them, and "in some instances penalties are imposed when they do. Yet the effect is evidently not great, for many union as well as nonunion men are numbered among the patrons." The lower prices charged and, in most cases, the cleaner places seemed to have been "sufficient to attract many white patrons in spite of the odium attaching among certain classes to patronizing Japanese restaurants."<sup>43</sup>

Likewise, Japanese holdings in the laundry trade in Seattle grew faster than in San Francisco. There were 20 establishments in 1905 and 37 in 1909. Most of these were small, 21 being connected with Japanese bathhouses and washed few clothes other than those left by those who took baths. With the remaining 16 laundries, some large, others small, the white laundries competed. Of the six that the Commission investigated, the largest had a capital of \$15,000 invested and a net annual profit of \$3,000, while the smallest a capital of \$300 invested and a net

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41. Ibid., p. ~~383~~.284. A few white waitresses employed by the ~~42x~~ Japanese received prevailing wages for the whites.

42. Ibid., p. 383.

43. Ibid., p. 284.



annual profit of \$600.<sup>44</sup> The number of workers in the Japanese laundries ranged from more than 40 persons to none; if four large steam laundries were excluded, the remaining 12 were "for the most part 'hand laundries,' employing on the average 8 persons each."<sup>45</sup> These workers, as in San Francisco, received regular wages in addition to board and lodging. They worked generally eleven or eleven and one-half hours per day and sixty-six or sixty-nine hours per week. "Their wages (per day) are not very different, but the wages per hour of the white women are considerably higher. . . . The wages per day of Japanese in the higher occupations are less than those paid white men doing the same kind of work. . . . It follows, therefore . . . the labor cost in the Japanese laundries is less than in the laundries conducted by their competitors."<sup>46</sup>

Most of the white laundries in Seattle were large, one of these, for instance, had a capital of \$150,000 invested and a gross business of \$182,000 for 1908-1909.<sup>47</sup> They felt Japanese competition most in the work done for hotels, restaurants, saloons, and barber shops, where the Japanese had resorted to undercutting prices and had been most successful in securing business. There had been some feeling "among laundry proprietors in favor of effecting" some measure to curb the increase of The "Anti-Jap Laundry League" of San Francisco made some effort to organize a similar group in Seattle, but, up to the time of

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44. Ibid., p. 383.

45. Ibid., p. 278.

46. Ibid., p. 280.

47. Ibid., p. 383.



the Commission's investigation, no concrete moves had been successful enough to affect the Japanese business.

The restaurant trade in Los Angeles was similar to that of ~~the two cities discussed above~~ <sup>Seattle</sup> and was growing with little or no opposition from the non-Japanese operators. The number of Japanese restaurants serving American meals was reported as 21 in 1904, and 25 in 1909. These were all small, located in "low class" districts, serving meals for 10 cents or for "15 cents and up." Except those designed to cater to Japanese, their patrons were generally composed of white laborers, largely foreign-born, Negroes and Mexicans. "A few conducted by the proprietor and his wife without other assistance; the largest has 11 employees. The average number of persons employed by the proprietor (who is frequently first cook) is about five." The wages of these workers were about same as those found in other cities, with a similar arrangement of "living in" system, although they were lower than the pay-scale for the white restaurant workers. The Japanese competition was felt by white entrepreneurs only in the districts where Japanese establishments were located. The investigator of the Immigration Commission, however, found that the Japanese served better meals in cleaner places than their competitors in the same district.<sup>48</sup>

In Los Angeles there were only two small laundries in 1904, but the number increased to seven in 1909. These laundries, except two, employed only a few persons each; and the largest two employed 20 and 23 persons, respectively. "These laundries have

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48. Ibid., pp. 229-230.



little in the way of equipment. In fact, they do 'hand work' almost exclusively and send most of the household linen delivered to them to the white steam laundries to be done at 'family flat work' rates."<sup>49</sup>

The substantial majority of their patrons were non Japanese, and their profits were fairly lucrative. The growth of the Japanese laundry trade was subsequently hampered by the informal restrictive practices of the white laundrymen who feared the potential strength of Japanese competition as seen in other Coast cities. "In May, 1909, the Laundrymen's Association, a loose organization of which practically all of the white laundry proprietors are members . . . adopted a resolution providing that no member of the association should accept any work from Japanese laundrymen. There is also a 'gentlemen's agreement' between the laundrymen and the laundry machinery supply houses to the effect that the latter shall not furnish equipment of any kind to the Japanese."<sup>50</sup> The Japanese thus faced these obstacles in addition to the prevalent anti-Japanese sentiment of the public, and their holdings in the trade were denied normal expansion.

In the branches of personal service where the competitors of Japanese were of first generation immigrant groups and not organized, the Japanese were able to hold their own, even in cities such as San Francisco where public sentiment against them was strong and the trade unions firmly entrenched. The Japanese cobblers are a good example. In 1909, "there were 72 Japanese

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49. Ibid., pp. 227-228.

50. Ibid., p. 228.



shops in San Francisco and at least 119 in other cities and towns of California."<sup>51</sup> All of these were operated on a small scale, and most by the proprietor alone. The Immigration Commission investigated seventeen of the Japanese cobbler shops in San Francisco and found that

the amount of capital employed varied from \$100 as a minimum to \$400 as a maximum. Only 4 of 17 had an employee, and in each of these cases the 1 employee was an apprentice. . . . The gross receipts from the business done, as reported, varied from \$1,200 to \$1,500 per year. The net earnings of the 17 master journeymen varied from \$40 to \$80, and averaged \$61.76 per month.<sup>52</sup>

There were several hundred, perhaps 1,000, cobbler shops in San Francisco, and the majority of them were "of foreign birth-- German, French, Hebrew, and Italian craftsmen being conspicuous among them." The cobblers investigated by the Commission complained, "almost without exception . . . of loss of business and smaller earnings than they had formerly made, in some cases less than one-half." The loss, however, was due to many causes, and the effect of Japanese competition applied only to some cases. In these cases the agent of the Commission found that "the lower prices charged by the Japanese cobblers than by most of their competitors; together with the large number of Japanese shops recently opened in some blocks, had caused the business and earnings of competing white cobblers to perceptibly diminish."<sup>53</sup>

It is to be remembered here that many of the cobblers derived additional income from the operation of boarding houses for domestic day workers.

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51. Ibid., pp. 197-198.

52. Ibid., p. 199.

53. Ibid., pp. 199-200.



All the Japanese cobblers belonged to a well-knit organization of their own to eliminate cut-throat competition among themselves and to ward off pressure from nonJapanese competitors. This "Japanese Shoemakers' Union" was formed in 1893, and its object was declared as "to promote a friendly association among the Japanese shoemakers, to provide means for their mutual assistance, and to limit and to control competition among themselves." It was the forerunner of many tradewide associations that mushroomed among the Japanese afterward for the same objectives. Uniform scales of minimum, sometimes actual, prices to be charged for repair work were established. These prices were usually lower than those charged elsewhere. Membership fees were regularly assessed and a "business fund" created. By 1909 the amount of the fund had reached \$10,000 or more. The union acted as a collective purchasing agent for the members. It

maintains a supply house in San Francisco and several thousand dollars of the "business fund" are invested in the stock of goods carried. Most of these goods are purchased from two firms in the East and are sold to the members of the organization at an advance of 10 per cent on the cost. The sales aggregate about \$3,200 per month, or some \$38,000 or \$40,000 per year. . . . The part of the "business fund" not invested in the supply business is retained in the bank to serve as an "emergency fund."

. . . Practically if not quite all of the Japanese engaged in the trade belong to this organization, which regulates the establishment and conduct of shops and stands ready to assist those in need of capital to conduct their business and those who meet with misfortune or are in distress. A journeyman member of the union must pass a test examination if he wishes to establish a shop within six months after gaining membership. An apprentice, after having served one year with a master journeyman, may establish and maintain an independent shop, but previous to doing so must have passed an examination. In opening shops, however, no two shall be located within 1,190 feet of each other. A member of the union opening a shop in a



locality where no Japanese shop is in existence may be assisted by the organization by a loan of money not to exceed \$50 in all.<sup>54</sup>

Like these cobblers, the Japanese in suit cleaning and pressing businesses<sup>54a</sup> were able to establish a foothold without meeting strong or organized opposition. In most major cities on the Coast they competed with small shops operated by European immigrants, but their expansion was rapid. In San Francisco, for instance, there were 15 of these shops in 1904, but by 1909 had increased to 52.<sup>55</sup> In Seattle there were 12 in 1905, and 45 in 1909;<sup>56</sup> in Los Angeles, 2 in 1904, and 16 in 1909.<sup>57</sup> Almost all these shops were operated on a small scale. The shops in San Francisco were typical. Scattered throughout the city, although more greatly concentrated in and around the Japanese "colony," a large percentage of the trade came from white persons. Most of these shops had

from 1 to 3 employees at work. A very few have as many as 5 persons employed, but a much larger number are conducted by 1 man or a man and wife or by 2 or 3 partners, without the assistance of any persons employed for wages. Of 7 typical shops, 2 were conducted by the proprietor without assistance, 3 by the proprietors and 1 employee each, 1 by 2 partners and 2 employees, and 1 by the employer and 5 employees. Some shops . . . have no more than \$120 to \$400 invested in them, while the larger shops in which tailoring as well as the cleaning and other work . . . is carried on represent an investment of \$2,000 or more. The rent per month paid in 7 cases varied from \$10 as a minimum to \$65 as a maximum, but in only 1 of the 7 cases did it exceed \$25. . . . The shops doing repairing, cleaning, dyeing, and pressing only reported gross earnings varying from \$360 to \$1,500 per year.<sup>58</sup>

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54. Ibid., p. 198.

54a. Some Japanese cleaners conducted dressmaking or tailoring services or both at the same time, but the suit cleaning business catered mostly to white patrons and remained more important than the others.

55. Ibid., p. 205.

56. Ibid., p. 281.

57. Ibid., p. 231.

58. Ibid., p. 205.



In cities where agitation against Japanese competition was weak and ineffective, such as in Seattle in the early years and Los Angeles in more recent years, the Japanese were able to expand into new fields that were closed to them in cities like San Francisco. Among the branches of personal service, hotels, lodging houses, and barber shops serving non-Japanese patrons in Seattle are good examples. In 1909 there were altogether 72 hotels and lodging houses. The Commission's investigator found that two or three of these establishments catered exclusively to white laborers. In about one-half of the others as many as 10, 15, or 20 per cent of the roomers were white. One of the larger establishments was "in the basement of a large brick building. The room is undivided and has 150 cots which let for 15 cents per night. Another is in a building formerly used as a skating rink and is of the same character as the one just described."<sup>59</sup> The business was fairly profitable, one of such places reporting to the Commission ~~that~~ a capital investment amounting to \$3,500 and a net profit of \$1,200.<sup>60</sup>

There were 12 barber shops in Seattle in 1900; 35 in 1905; 64 in 1909. "Most of them are carried on in connection with baths or pool rooms or laundries. Usually the capital employed is not in excess of \$800. Frequently the barbers are only the proprietor and his wife, and of 64 shops only 4 have more than three or four 'chairs.' The total number of barbers is 143. The rent paid seldom exceeds \$90 per month, and in one instance it is only \$15. . . . Of ten Japanese shops investigated . . . white persons

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59. Ibid., 288.

60. Ibid., p. 385.



(largely laborers) constitute perhaps two-thirds of their patrons."<sup>61</sup> The Japanese barber shops charged lower prices and this not only caused a lower union scale in many white barber shops, but in some instances drove their white competitors out of business.

In contrast, only the beginning of hotel and lodging business patronized by white persons in Los Angeles was noted in 1909. Among some 100 Japanese-operated establishments, "only 2 of some 30 known to the agents [of the Immigration Commission] had any white patrons, and in those instances they constituted for one 20 per cent and the other only about 1 per cent of the total number."<sup>62</sup> The number of Japanese-operated barber shops, on the other hand, had been increasing rapidly from 18 in 1904 to 44 in 1909. As in Seattle, almost all these were small shops, "the majority with two chairs, the proprietor being assisted by his wife or one employee." They were

freely patronized by other races as well as by Japanese, the proportions of the various races depending largely upon the character of the population residing or working in the immediate vicinity of each shop. . . . These races other than Japanese include some negroes and Mexicans as well as white men, chiefly foreign born. The Japanese proprietors are making very good profits. The profits of the 8 from whom data were obtained varied between \$600 and \$1,080, and averaged \$832.50 for the year 1908. The capital invested varied from \$300 to \$2,000 per shop.<sup>63</sup>

With respect to retail and wholesale trades for white patronage, opportunities for the Japanese in San Francisco were very limited, with the exception of art goods stores, already mentioned, and the florist business. The latter business grew

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61. Ibid., p. 282.

62. Ibid., p. 235.

63. Ibid., pp. 226-227.



incidental to the flower-growing and nursery industry which the Japanese had successfully developed in the San Francisco Bay Area. "By 1906 there were some fifteen nurseries, mostly located in the Oakland district; these were engaged in the growing of roses, carnations, and chrysanthemums."<sup>64</sup> The growers brought their products to San Francisco for wholesaling. The Chinese and the Italians, however, dominated the industry, and in association with the white retail florists, who also feared the potential threat of Japanese expansion, tried for many years to drive the Japanese out of business. Capitalizing on prevailing anti-Japanese sentiment, boycott of Japanese products was urged and malicious propaganda used to further incite ill-feeling. Some Japanese were violently attacked.<sup>65</sup> They were able to hold their own, however, because they controlled some of the varieties in demand, and their products brought in good profits. In order to solidify their position, the Japanese growers formed an association and rented a building<sup>in</sup> the city, where they sold their flowers to retailers. This was the forerunner of other prosperous cooperative wholesale flower markets operated by the Japanese on the West Coast.

In Seattle the expansion of Japanese holdings in the grocery trade for non Japanese patronage was noteworthy, although not without struggle. There were 16 Japanese-operated groceries in 1905 and 26 in 1909.

They are all located in the district in which the Japanese immigrants live, and the effects of their competition

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64. Ichihashi, op. cit., p. 202.

65. The Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-hin Shi, pp. 212-213.



are limited to the competing stores in that part of the city.

In this part of Seattle there are many small stores conducted by Italians, Greeks, and Serbians, and some by natives and north European immigrants. The few large stores are conducted by the latter classes only. The Japanese stores are all small, the capital of nine from which complete data were collected by an agent of the commission aggregating only \$19,200, or a little more than \$2,000 each. Their annual transactions aggregated \$96,800. an average of a little less than \$11,000. The rents paid by eight of the nine proprietors aggregated \$3,964, or an average of about \$495.50 per year.

The small shops . . . conducted by Italians, Greeks, and Austrians are patronized very largely by persons of the same race as the proprietors. Few of the south European immigrants of this district trade elsewhere than with their countrymen. Nor do these grocers receive much patronage from the other races. . . . And on the other hand, the business done by the Americans, north Europeans, and Japanese with these classes is not of much greater importance. The vast majority of the Japanese and a considerable proportion of the natives and north European immigrants trade with the Japanese grocers. . . . If the size of the stores is taken into consideration, it would seem that something less than three-fifths of the patronage was by others than Japanese. This patronage by white persons is explained partly by the fact that the stores may be the nearest, partly by the fact that the Japanese sell some goods, such as rice, at lower prices than their competitors. The increasing number of Japanese provision stores, with their large percentage of white patrons, has rather seriously affected the business of white grocers not dependent upon their own countrymen for most of their trade.<sup>66</sup>

White grocers became alarmed and made many unsuccessful attempts to rid themselves of Japanese competition. In 1914, for example, the Retail Grocers' Association exerted effective pressure on wholesale grocers who agreed to refuse accounts to Japanese grocers. The boycott seemed to succeed "until it became evident that the Japanese stores would secure the necessary stocks of goods from wholesale grocers in Tacoma and elsewhere. The plan

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66. Ibid., pp. 285-287.



to boycott was then abandoned. The opposition, however, had not ceased. It has only failed to find a practical method of becoming effective."<sup>67</sup>

Japanese businessmen on the Pacific Coast, dependent on general patronage, thus met many obstacles, sometimes insurmountable, between 1900 and 1909. Greater progress was made, however, for the corresponding years in businesses designed to meet the wants of fellow countrymen. Business of the latter type expanded most rapidly in San Francisco and Seattle because of their regional importance as ports of arrival and departure for Japanese immigrants and as vital centers of Japanese labor supply. Increasing immigration and effects of social forces within and without their own communities created the demand and self-perpetuating factors for Japanese-operated Japanese-serving hotels, lodging houses, barber shops, restaurants, bath houses and pool halls. The immigrant Japanese tended to cluster together among themselves and patronize establishments operated by their own racial group, because of their language difficulty and desire to avoid unaccustomed situations. Various forces from outside, viz., anti-Japanese agitation and discriminatory practices, tended to solidify this in-group cohesion. Only limited areas were available to them for their shops and residences. As a rule they were not accepted as guests at Caucasian-operated hotels, boarding and lodging houses, were refused service in white barber shops and restaurants, and were denied the use of many recreational facilities. Thus the

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67. Millis, op. cit., p. 78.



nucleus of "Japtown" or "Little Tokyo" was formed in a small, restricted area by Japanese-operated hotels, restaurants, groceries, barber shops, etc. Around this nucleus dry goods stores, jewelry shops, pool halls, drug stores, etc. usually developed. In 1909 ~~more than~~ a majority of the 545 Japanese-operated establishments in San Francisco were designed to meet the needs of their own people. Among them were 35 hotels and boarding houses, and "possibly as many rooming houses,"<sup>68</sup> 18 barber shops, 13 bath houses, 13 men's furnishing stores, 7 jewelry and watch repairing shops, 33 restaurants serving Japanese meals, and 20 or more pool halls.<sup>69</sup> Among retail establishments there were 22 groceries dealing in Japanese provisions, 8 book stores, selling books in Japanese, stationery, and notions, 3 drug stores selling Japanese drugs and notions, 7 confectioneries, 4 fish markets, etc. Also significant was the presence of 3 vernacular dailies disseminating not only the news of Japanese communities, but also foreign news with emphasis on reports from Japan.<sup>70</sup>

In Seattle, too, more than half of the 478 Japanese-operated establishments catered almost exclusively to their countrymen. In 1909 there were about <sup>72</sup>7 hotels and lodging houses (about 40 of them were like private rooming houses with few rooms), 26 bath houses, 7 jewelry and watch repairing shops, 51 restaurants serving Japanese meals, and 25 pool halls. Among stores in the retail trade, there were 4 book and drug stores, 5 confectioneries, and 5 fish markets. The 26 groceries and 46 barber shops, as already stated, catered only to whites in some cases, and to Japanese

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68. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, p. 202.

69. Ibid., pp. 202-209.

70. Ibid.



exclusively, or both in others.<sup>71</sup> There were also three daily vernacular newspapers.

In Los Angeles, too, businesses meeting the needs of the Japanese expanded much more rapidly than others, especially after the rapid influx of farmers and farm workers beginning about 1904. It is also noted that stores and shops classified in the personal service field increased. In 1909 there were 90 hotels and boarding houses, almost all serving Japanese, 58 restaurants serving Japanese meals, 26 bath houses, 33 pool halls, and 44 barbers. In the retail fields, on the other hand, there were 27 Japanese provision and grocery stores, 8 book and drug stores, and 2 men's furnishing stores.<sup>72</sup>

In smaller cities in California, such as Sacramento, Fresno, and Stockton, the Japanese were mostly concerned with branches of business which dealt with their own people. As these cities were centers for Japanese farmers and farm laborers, personal service establishments grew rapidly. For instance, in Sacramento approximately half of the 209 Japanese businesses in 1909 were of a personal service nature; 26 barber shops, 7 bath houses, 37 hotels and lodging houses, 6 laundries, 8 restaurants serving American meals, 28 restaurants serving Japanese meals, 6 tailoring and cleaning firms.<sup>73</sup> In the cases of some of the barber shops, the restaurants serving American meals, and laundries, their patrons included white, south European immigrants, or Negroes, and the percentage of Japanese patrons varied.

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71. Ibid., p. 100.

72. Ibid., p. 100.

73. Ibid.



It is to be remembered that the tabulations of Japanese-operated establishments contained some duplications, for some of them conducted more than one business at one location. For example,

*Desert*

labor contractors, in addition to the employment agency, almost invariably conduct hotels or boarding houses as a further source of profit and as a means of assembling laborers, and frequently conduct provision and supply stores as well. Many of the restaurants serving Japanese meals are carried on in connection with hotels and boarding houses. Billiard and pool halls and cigar stores are frequently connected with barber shops. Bath houses are usually connected with barber shops, small laundries, or boarding houses. The selling of books and drugs is usually combined in one business or affiliated with other branches of business. . . . The job printing is more frequently than not carried on in connection with the publication of a newspaper or magazine.<sup>74</sup>

*implied*

As inferred above, most of these establishments were small, employing comparatively little capital and few employees. The operation and earnings of Japanese hotel keepers in San Francisco is reported by the Immigration Commission as follows:

[ Hotel keeping and contracting for labor are closely related. Indeed, each of the 12 "contractors" now in business in San Francisco is boarding-house keeper. In many cases the largest income is from the commissions charged . . . in these cases the keeping of the boarding house is more or less incidental to assembling a "gang" of laborers. One proprietor of a house of more than 30 rooms reported that his net income from the boarding and lodging business was \$1,000; from commissions from laborers supplied, \$2,500. Another proprietor of a house of about the same size reported a net income of \$600 from boarding and lodging, \$1,600 from his other business, but chiefly from commissions paid by laborers for whom work was found. The proprietor of another establishment reported a total annual income of \$1,700, \$500 of which was derived from his commissions. Finally, the proprietor of a comparatively small establishment reported an income of \$600 from boarding and lodging and \$400 from his services as a "labor agent."<sup>75</sup>

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74. Ibid., p. 101.

75. Ibid., p. 204.



Prior to 1907, when many immigrants were arriving from Japan and the Hawaiian Islands, these hotel keepers had operated very extensive businesses. Since the cessation of immigration, however, their profits had dwindled. Some of the larger hotels in San Francisco and Seattle were able to adapt themselves to the new trend of accommodating the departure of old residents and the arrival of wives and children to join their husbands and fathers.

There were also other types of hotels operated by Japanese. There were a large number of lodging houses in Los Angeles, Sacramento, Fresno and elsewhere, with few regular guests, that provided room and board at low prices for transient agricultural laborers. There were also boarding houses, as in Los Angeles and San Francisco for house-cleaners, gardeners, restaurant employees, and others employed in the city. There were others in larger cities that catered to regular boarders of the white collar class.

The operation of Japanese provision and grocery stores is illustrated by the following account of the nine establishments in Los Angeles that were investigated by the Immigration Commission:

These 9 were selected as typical of the larger number. It is noteworthy that of the 9 stores investigated, 2 had been established in 1903, 3 in 1906, 1 in 1907, and 3 in 1908. One employed a capital of \$50,000, another \$26,000, a third \$7,500, a fourth \$7,000. The amount of capital employed by the other 5 varied from \$700 to \$3,000. The amount of business transacted during the twelve months preceding the time of the investigation varied between \$2,400 and \$140,000, the total for the 9 establishments being \$423,400. . . . Four of the 9 establishments were so small that they were conducted by the proprietor and



his wife or by the partners engaged in the business. The other 5 employed from 1 to 12 clerks. Of the 25 clerks and drivers employed, all but 1 were Japanese. The salaries of 2 managers were \$125 and \$90 per month, respectively. Of 21 other male Japanese employees, 3 were paid \$50, 2 \$45, 3 \$40, 9 \$35, and 4 \$30 per month, while 1 female was paid \$25 per month -- all with board and lodging. The 1 native white employee was paid \$60 per month.<sup>76</sup>

Most of these stores also hired salesmen to make regular calls and deliveries to Japanese farmers and farm laborers in the outlying districts. Many of the Japanese grocery stores in Sacramento, for example, served Japanese

farmers and laborers "about Newcastle, Florin, the several towns along the Sacramento River, and elsewhere. This trade is an important part of the whole, for the "bosses" buy supplies in large quantities for the men who work under their control."<sup>77</sup>

few available

Growth in the/fields of trade which depended on a fixed number of <sup>Japanese</sup> customers reached its peak rapidly over a short span of years. Thus, as with their white competitors, the Japanese resorted to the undercutting of prices. In order to eliminate harmful practices and to regulate the opening of additional stores, they organized many tradewide associations for their mutual benefit. The cobblers' association in San Francisco, already described, is an example. There were many others: In San Francisco, for instance, "Japanese Hotel Keepers' Association," "Japanese Suit Cleaning Union," "Association of Japanese Laundries of America"; in Sacramento, "Japanese Barbers' Union," "Japanese Restaurant Keepers' Association," etc.

It can be stated in summary that the development of Japanese

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76. Ibid., p. 233.

77. Ibid., p. 254.



business in Pacific Coast cities, since the early <sup>days</sup> beginning, had been shaped largely by the social forces from without. The rapid influx of new Japanese immigrants and vigorous anti-Japanese agitation had given raison d'etre for self-sustaining, segregated communities and for commercial establishments designed to meet the wants of fellow countrymen. In 1909 more than half of the Japanese-operated shops and stores were of this variety. Among the more numerous were stores dealing in Japanese provisions, restaurants, hotels and lodging houses, barber shops, and pool halls. The rate of expansion in these trades, therefore, depended on the growth of Japanese population. In San Francisco and Seattle, the chief ports of entry and departure, and in Sacramento, the center for Japanese farming activities, Japanese stores for Japanese patronage expanded more rapidly.

In fields where the Japanese competed with white entrepreneurs their growth was <sup>impeded</sup> ~~determined~~ by the degree of public hostility and the effectiveness of concerted opposition. Generally, trade unions and white entrepreneurs' associations formed spearheads for agitation to engender effective hostility against Japanese competitors. In an older stable city like San Francisco, where labor unions were firmly entrenched, Japanese operations in competitive fields were well curbed. Only in the laundry trade, the suit cleaning business, and in shoe repairing could the Japanese hold their own, although not without difficulty. In newer, faster-growing cities like Seattle and Los Angeles, anti-Japanese opposition was weaker, and the Japanese could move into more diversified lines beyond the boundaries of "Jap Town." In Seattle their expansion in service trades for general patronage, such as barber shops, laundries,



restaurants, and hotels and lodging houses, and in the grocery business, was particularly rapid, while in Los Angeles a beginning in the same lines was noted. Another important branch was the operation of Oriental curios and art goods stores, in competition with Chinese shops. However, the consumers' demands were of a special nature, and opportunities for expansion, therefore, were limited, although shops around San Francisco's "Chinatown" seemed to prosper.

The Japanese business establishments were small, with comparatively few exceptions, employing on the whole little capital. They were more commonly conducted by the proprietors, or the proprietors and their wives, or with one or two employees. Only in a small number of cases were five or more employed, and they were almost invariably Japanese. Few white persons were employed by Japanese. Standards of compensation and working conditions were inferior to those found in Caucasian-operated establishments. The Japanese employees commonly received lodging and board, but worked longer hours and received less money.

In subsequent years the Japanese were able to strengthen their foothold in most branches of commercial and personal service trades, although in some lines recession was noted. In 1915, Millis observed that

there has been some gain in number of establishments conducted, in spite of a slowly decreasing number of adult Japanese in the country. The increase in capital and business transacted has been greater than the increase in the number of establishments. The number of important shops has perceptibly increased and the number of small ones has not noticeably diminished. In places like Denver, Salt Lake City, Ogden, Fresno, and San Francisco, where the population has been almost stationary or has fallen off, many small establishments have become bankrupt



and little or no gain has been made. The restriction of immigration has seriously injured many lines of business in these supply centers. In Sacramento, Los Angeles, and Seattle, on the other hand, conditions have been more favorable and a very considerable advance has been made, especially in the larger places securing more or less "American trade."<sup>78</sup>

In those cities where no advance was made, the hostile feeling on the part of the Caucasian businessmen in general seemed to have waned. In San Francisco, for instance, overt trade unions activity against the Japanese competitors subsided, although anti-Japanese sentiment remained unabated. Even the Anti-Jap Laundry League became less vociferous. The organization

it is true, protests against underbidding, alleged bad sanitary conditions, and the like, as of old; but the main reason for the continued opposition is found in the feeling that the fight must be kept up because of an immigration problem presumed to be lurking in the background, if not in the fact that it makes jobs with salaries attached.<sup>79</sup>

The expansion of Japanese holdings in the grocery trade in Seattle, and restrictive measures taken by white grocers, have been described. A greater growth in all lines, however, took place in Los Angeles.

The number of establishments has increased by fully fifty per cent and the amount of capital invested and business transacted by perhaps two hundred per cent. While an increasing number of restaurants have been started in different locations to secure white patronage, most of East 1st Street and one or two cross streets, which several years ago were shared by others and the Japanese, are now occupied very generally by Japanese establishments. The general appearance of the community is much better than it was five years

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78. Millis, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

79. Ibid., p. 76.



ago. A number of the general stores are very good ones indeed, the barber shops have expanded in some cases from two to four or more chairs, two first-class tailoring establishments have appeared, two very good hotels have been erected and are patronized by others as well as by Japanese, and several of the boarding houses are in very good buildings and are well furnished.<sup>80</sup>

Some improvements in the living standards and the working conditions were also noted by Millis, who wrote:

The Japanese are living better than they did. The many women who have come have improved the housekeeping, while time has greatly changed the average man's standards than formerly obtained, and better than observed by most others in the same sections of these Western cities, has been made possible by better earnings. The wages paid in laundries, stores, and elsewhere are considerably higher than they were before the agreement made a difference in the number of new immigrants. And with this increase in wages a great part of the advantage the Japanese once had in competing with other business men has been lost, and the instances of underbidding have become comparatively few. Everywhere the prices charged by Japanese barbers were found to have come to the scale charged at the better white shops and to be higher than those charged at the poor shops conducted nearby by white immigrants.<sup>81</sup>

The Japanese, too, enjoyed the general prosperity during World War I, but soon after its end anti-Japanese agitation that had remained dormant for the war years flared anew all over the Pacific Coast. That the enactment of the more stringent alien land laws by western states forced Japanese retrenchment in farming has been mentioned. In <sup>urban</sup> ~~municipal~~ commercial activities many changes were brought about by various factors, such as the stoppage of immigration by the Exclusion Law of 1924, adverse policies of some city administrations, the appearance of chain stores, etc. In San Francisco, according to Ichihashi's tabulation, there were 647 establishments in 1929, an increase of

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80. Ibid., p. 74.

81. Ibid., pp. 75-76.



some 100 since 1909.<sup>82</sup> The largest increase was shown in the cleaning and dyeing trade, from 52 to 114, and the largest decrease, from 76 in 1909 to 23 in 1929, in the shoe repairing business. The increase in the former trade is probably due to the fact that it met little opposition from white competitors, that only small capital was needed to establish a shop, and that they could be operated profitably without hired help. The decrease in the latter trade was "probably caused mainly by the . . . rise of chain shops, better equipped and better organized. The Japanese cobblers succumbed before the onslaught of chain systems as have other small retailers in many lines."<sup>83</sup> In branches of business for Japanese patronage, only slight changes were shown.

By the end of 1939 the number of establishments in San Francisco had declined to 538,<sup>84</sup> a decrease of some 100. The number of shoe repairing shops further dropped. The number of establishments which catered to Japanese patrons also declined. There were 35 hotels and lodging houses in 1939, as compared to 51 in 1909 and 46 in 1929, and many of them that had formerly

82. Ichihashi, op. cit., pp. 131-132. This total includes 9 photographers and 13 lawyers and interpreters. Tabulations of commercial establishments from Japanese-American Yearbooks should not be interpreted too rigidly, for no two investigators would agree in the classificatory standards. Discrepancy, for instance, would arise



catered to new immigrants and transients were now converted to accommodate more permanent lodgers. The number of groceries dealing in Japanese provisions also declined from 30 to 17 in <sup>1929-1939</sup> ~~the same period~~. Among the branches of business for general patronage, only the cleaning and dyeing trade and the art goods business were able to hold their own, the former numbering 123 and the latter 50. The number of laundries, for example, decreased to 13 in <sup>1939</sup> ~~1940~~, although many of them had recently installed modern machinery. The number of restaurants serving American meals fell to 16, only 4 of which were known to have catered to white patrons.

H The number of art goods stores, on the one hand, showed a slight decline, from 54 in 1929 to 50 in <sup>1939</sup> ~~1940~~. Business volume, however, declined more than is shown in the decrease in the number of stores, especially after the outbreak of the China-Japan war. The general public, sympathizing with the Chinese, tended to avoid the Japanese stores, and the Chinese merchants in turn encouraged and enjoyed the informal boycott of their Japanese competitors. A Nisei employed in one of the stores in Chinatown described the general sentiment in the following words:

I knew that some kind of trouble was brewing in the Orient because 9 out of 10 Caucasian customers who came into the store asked us if we were Chinese or Japanese. I didn't know very much about the politics of the thing because I couldn't see where it related to me. When I was asked the question, that was the time when I felt awfully low. It was a strange feeling I had because I

~~in classifying stores that operated two or more businesses simultaneously or firms engaged in importing and exporting as well as in wholesaling and retailing. It is also true, as has been pointed out earlier, that duplications could not be eliminated entirely.~~

83. Ibid., p. 135.

84. Tabulated from The Japanese American Directory, The Japanese American Publishing Co., San Francisco, 1940.



didn't know exactly why I should be asked of my nationality. Usually I came right out and said I was a Japanese-American. . . . The owners of the stores were friendly toward the Chinese merchants because they handled Chinese goods. But one thing I noticed that no Chinese persons ever came to buy anything in a Japanese store because they resented Japan invading China. This was true from about 1937 on. . . . There was quite a bit of competition between the Chinese and Japanese stores as they were located right next to each other.<sup>85</sup>

The situation became worse in the late thirties, and by 1940 every Japanese store felt the effects of general hostility. A Nisei explained that his employer instructed him "to tell the tourists that all of the goods were Chinese goods even though it was plainly stamped on the back 'Made in Japan.'"

It was declining business as the tension in the Orient increased and the Americans became more sympathetic to China. . . . The people of Chinatown were all excited about the war and they held many meetings and parades in order to get the Americans to donate to them. The Americans were sympathetic to China's cause so that it was okay. . . . Chinese merchants began putting signs in the window saying "This is a Chinese store." . . . Even in those trying times there were still many Caucasians who did buy Japanese goods and they didn't seem to mind. The Caucasians who objected to Japanese goods never came into the store. It was rather uncomfortable during those times because I never knew what they would say. . . . The Japanese goods were never put on exhibit in the windows because that might have chased the tourists away. The boss always instructed us to sell the Japanese goods to the customers when they came in though. (2) Even the things which were imported from Japan began to resemble Chinese goods.<sup>86</sup>

~~In Table 377 the occupational records of 350 persons who were born in 1921 or before and were engaged in trade or personal service in San Francisco in 1940 are compiled. It shows that 187, or 49.6, 190, or 50.4, 172, or 51.1 per cent, were entrepreneurs, and 171, or 49.0 per~~

85. Case History No. 53, pp. 52-55.

86. Ibid.



The number of Japanese engaged in wholesale, retail, and personal service (exclusive of domestic service) trades in San Francisco in 1940 was reported by the Census as 964, representing 37.4 per cent of the Japanese in all occupations in the city.<sup>21</sup>

There were 128 in wholesale trade, 453 in retail trade, and 383 in personal services.<sup>22</sup> The records, obtained in our sampling of

WRA interview schedules, of evacuees from San Francisco throw a considerable light on the economic status of full-time workers.

The result of our sampling is compiled in Table <sup>3</sup>.

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1. In the previous chapter it has been noted that 38.1 per cent of the Japanese in all occupations in San Francisco in 1940 were in domestic service.
  2. See Chapter III, p.
  3. It has been stated in the previous chapter that for the purpose of sampling domestic workers in San Francisco, 44 volumes were first chosen from the complete set of 568 volumes of WRA interview records. For actual sampling, however, a set of 15 volumes were selected from these 44 volumes. In sampling those evacuees from San Francisco in all occupations other than domestic service, the first set of 44 volumes was used in order to obtain a larger number of records for analyses. Again, this sampling was limited to those who were evacuated from San Francisco, were born in 1921 or before, and worked full-time in San Francisco in April, 1940. (except domestic service).



281 in total

Our sample contained 81 in wholesale trade, and 344 in personal services, a total of 706. They were, in turn, comprised of 254 entrepreneurs and 452 employees. Table shows the distribution by nativity of these employers and employees, while the distribution of the employees by their nativity and the nativity of their employers is shown in Table .

In our sample, a large majority of the entrepreneurs were Issei, i.e., <sup>85</sup>~~85~~ per cent, while only 5 per cent were Nisei, and 10 per cent Kibei. The Issei and Nisei were, however, almost equally numerous among the employees, the Issei constituting 43 per cent, the Nisei 41 per cent, and the Kibei 16 per cent.

Japanese-operated establishments employed persons of their own ethnic group almost exclusively; white help was seldom hired. Correspondingly, only a small number of Japanese obtained positions in Caucasian-operated establishments, and most of them were in menial jobs. In our sample, indeed, 85 per cent of all employees worked for Japanese, and fewer than 10 per cent of Nisei and Kibei were employed by Caucasians. More than half of the more numerous group of Caucasian-employed Issei were janitors, and the next most



TABLE  
EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF 706 JAPANESE IN SAN FRANCISCO,  
APRIL, 1940, ENGAGED FULL-TIME IN WHOLESALE, RETAIL,  
AND PERSONAL SERVICE TRADES  
(Except Domestic Service)

|       | Proprietors |       | Employees |       | Total |       |
|-------|-------------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
|       | No.         | %     | No.       | %     | No.   | %     |
| Issei | 215         | 84.7  | 193       | 42.7  | 408   | 57.8  |
| Nisei | 13          | 5.1   | 185       | 40.9  | 198   | 28.0  |
| Kibei | 26          | 10.2  | 74        | 16.4  | 100   | 14.2  |
| Total | 254         | 100.0 | 452       | 100.0 | 706   | 100.0 |

Source: WRA Form No. 26.



frequent place of employment was in restaurants.

A few Japanese were hired by Caucasian firms which solicited Japanese patronage, e.g., a clothing salesman for a mail order house, and an automobile salesman. Rare, indeed, were the Japanese in the "better" positions in Caucasian stores; among them were 4 Nisei girls who were typists and stenographers, and 2 Issei who operated as retouchers in photographic studios.

Numerically the most important, according to Table , were the art goods business among the retail trade, and cleaning and dyeing among personal services. Some 44 per cent of Japanese engaged in personal services <sup>(exclusive of domestic service)</sup> were found in the cleaning and dyeing trade. Somewhat more than a half were proprietors, of whom 80 per cent were Issei. The employees were almost equally divided between the foreign-born and the native-born. A large portion of these shops were operated by proprietors with the help of their family members. According to our sample, for example, a little over half of those reporting their earnings stated that they were full-time family workers without pay. The others reported their monthly income ranging from \$40 to \$200, and all except a few received \$100 or less per month.



Those engaged in the Oriental art goods business, in our sample, represented 42 per cent of the Japanese occupied in retail trade. Of them, 19 per cent were proprietors, almost all being Issei. The Nisei, on the other hand, were most numerous among those employed, comprising 71 per cent of all Japanese employed in this trade. In fact, the art goods stores offered numerically most employment opportunities for the Nisei; 59 per cent of the Nisei employees in the various retail trades were hired in these stores. Among the Nisei employees, the female outnumbered the male by 1.6 to 1. Half of them were salesclerks, while one-fifth were managers and supervisors and another one-fifth were bookkeepers and typists. Their monthly earnings were meager except for those in managerial positions; most of the males and all of the females received \$100 per month or less.<sup>1</sup>

1. Of the 67 Nisei employees, 61 reported their incomes which are compiled in the following table:

MONTHLY EARNINGS OF 61 NISEI (BORN IN 1921<sup>2</sup> OR BEFORE)  
EMPLOYED FULL-TIME IN ORIENTAL ART GOODS STORES, SAN FRANCISCO, 1940

|                      | Male      | Female    |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Less than \$50       | 0         | 3         |
| \$50 - \$74          | 6         | 24        |
| \$75 - \$99          | 10        | 8         |
| \$100 - \$149        | 4         | 0         |
| \$150 - \$199        | 2         | 0         |
| \$200 - \$249        | 2         | 0         |
| Unpaid family worker | 0         | 2         |
|                      | <u>24</u> | <u>37</u> |

Source: WRA Form No. 26.



The level of positions held by the Issei employees was higher, and their earnings were correspondingly more. Almost half of them were managers or supervisors and received \$100 per month or more.<sup>1</sup>

The educational level of those engaged in this business was significantly higher than the average of Japanese population in America. For the Issei, only about one-fifth had failed to go beyond elementary school, while all except a few of the Nisei were either high school graduates or college educated.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Of the 25 Issei employed in art goods stores, in our sample, 10 males and 2 females were managers and supervisors, while 3 males and 2 females were salesclerks. Of them, 21 reported their earnings: 2 received less than \$75 per month; 6, more than \$75 but less than \$100; 6, more than \$100 but less than \$150; 4, more than \$150 but less than \$200; 2, more than \$200; and 1 was an unpaid family worker.
  2. For the Issei, only 10 had failed to go beyond elementary school, 14 had had some education in the Japanese equivalent of a high school, 14 had graduated from high school, and 2 were college educated. Nine of these Issei had had additional schooling in this country ranging from three to ten years. Four other Issei had had no schooling in Japan, but 2 had been graduated from high school and the other 2 had been educated in college in America. For the Nisei, only 1 had failed to go beyond elementary school, 5 had attended but had not finished high school, 42 had been graduated from high school, 10 had had some college education, and 9 were college graduates.



Also significant was the fact that three out of four Nisei employees were born in the San Francisco Bay Area and only a few had come from southern California, suggesting that jobs in art goods stores, regarded as of "better" positions locally, were not attractive enough to the outsider.

Working conditions in the art goods stores around 1940 described by the Nisei quoted earlier in the following words:



There must have been around 200 or 300 Nisei working along Grant Ave. in the various art goods stores. It was fairly easy for me to get a job on Grant Ave.<sup>1</sup> through a Nisei friend of mine who worked down there. The firm hired about 12 Nisei and the highest paid in that group only got between \$81 and \$100 a month after working for 5 years. All of them put in over 48 hours of work a week. I was employed as a stockboy. We worked 8 hours a day in the stockroom for six days a week. The job was very monotonous. I started at \$45 a month, but I didn't think of the wage at all. I was excited about my first job and I interpreted it as the first step toward a successful career. The months began to go by and during two years of this slave work I received only a \$10 raise. When I finally got up into the sales department I worked 10 hours a day with only Sundays off. Actually I didn't get any increase in pay because I put in more hours. The only thing I got was an added prestige and a chance to meet some of the customers. I had to wear clean shirts every day so that my laundry bills went up. Some of the other stores worked the Nisei 12 to 14 hours a day, especially around Christmas time. I know that in my company we were expected to work 16 hours a day during the Christmas season without any overtime. The boss would give us a small bonus for Christmas but the amount usually was quite small. I never heard of anyone getting more than one week's salary for a bonus. They just expected us to put in this overtime because it was supposed to be our duty to the store. Their idea was that it was the employee's responsibility to come to the aid of the company when it was busy. They certainly had funny ideas about a worker's duty to the company. If anyone complained, they were branded as being disloyal and not to be trusted by anyone.

<sup>1</sup> Among the Japanese, "Grant Ave." is often used synonymously for Chinatown of San Francisco.



I found out that the promotions did not come very easily and most of them were based upon favoritism. If the employer had a friend whose son was just out of college, they would give him the best opening available so that those of us who worked for months for that position were just out of luck. I got pretty disgusted at the whole thing. Being stuck in a job like that was sure crummy and I don't see how I stood it. We couldn't complain about it very much because jobs were too scarce. I didn't have the gumption to quit as I was afraid that I could not find another job. The other Nisei along Grant Ave. were more or less in a rut so that they stayed on in their jobs until it was too late for them to try anything else. They griped all the time about how they were being exploited but they didn't do anything about it. The only compensation was that a Grant Ave. job among the Nisei had some prestige because it was white collar work. The Nisei preferred to do that than doing a laborer's job. They could have worked in domestic jobs for better pay but they didn't feel like going back to the same thing that their parents had gotten out of.<sup>89</sup>

Another Nisei told of his experience in an art goods store as follows:

The Christmas season was just starting, so I finally received a job as a clerk in one of the art goods stores on Grant Ave. I was supposed to put in 10 to 12 hours a day, 7 days a week for a salary of \$50 a month. I didn't see the sense of working for such slave labors, so I attempted to talk some of the other Nisei boys into organizing a union. These Nisei were afraid to take such actions because their livelihood depended upon it and they did not think that it was proper to protest against an Issei employer, so they refused to take part in any organization movement. My employer heard of my activities and I was immediately dismissed.<sup>90</sup>

Working conditions in Japanese-operated establishments in other fields were not any better. Conditions in a laundry in San Francisco are described by a Nisei in the following words:



In Los Angeles the Japanese in business made notable progress since the growth noted during Millis' investigation. In 1928, according to Kataoka's tabulation from Japanese directories, there were more than 1,700 establishments operated by Japanese.<sup>92</sup> By the end of 1939, the number had increased to approximately 2,200.<sup>93</sup> A comparison of these data for 1928 and 1939 with those obtained by the Immigration Commission for 1909 (Table ) reveals that increments were generally much greater in those branches of business that catered to the general public than those designed to meet the needs of their own people. The greatest expansion of Japanese holdings took place in the fields of shipping, wholesaling, and retailing of agricultural products, complementing the rapid growth of Japanese enterprises in farming in central and southern California. As early as in 1909, a Japanese source reports, there were in the Los Angeles wholesale produce markets several wholesale

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92. W.T. Kataoka, "Occupations of Japanese in Los Angeles," Sociology and Social Research, September-October, 1929, vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 52-58.

93. Tabulated from The Rafu Shimpō Yearbook and Directory, Rafu Shimpō Sha, Los Angeles, 1940.



houses and a number of Japanese farmers from the hinterland selling their own farm products.<sup>94</sup> The number of Japanese-operated wholesale establishments increased to 149 in 1939.<sup>95</sup> Twenty-two of them were "commission houses," which received fruits and vegetables, mostly Japanese-grown, on consignment from farmers and sold them to retailers. Some of the larger houses were also engaged in sending and receiving carload lots to and from out-of-state areas. There were also three firms which specialized in produce shipping, and 14 others which were engaged mostly in jobbing, i.e., buying produce from other houses and selling to retailers.<sup>96</sup> Most of the others were in the inner courts of these wholesale markets, occupying stalls and operating in general on

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94. The Japanese Association of America, op. cit., pp. 201-205. The Immigration Commission did not report any of these firms in its findings.

95. W.R. Kataoka reports that there were 38 "farm-product agencies" in 1928 (op. cit.). It is interpreted to mean that they were commission houses, shippers, and jobbers. Other wholesale produce dealers were evidently not included in this total.

96. These figures obtained from the Rafu Shimpo Yearbook are at variance with the findings of the Tolan Committee. "Of the 167 fruit and vegetable merchants in the 3 Los Angeles wholesale markets, as of December 6, 1941, 29 were Japanese-owned." (U.S. Congress, House. Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration. Fourth Interim Report, p. 120).



a smaller scale.<sup>97</sup> Most of these stall merchants were those commonly referred to as "hauling men," who superseded the earlier system whereby farmers themselves marketed their products. The prevalent type of hauling man would live in an outlying area where Japanese farmers are concentrated. He would have a few helpers, and would operate a fleet of trucks. In the evening the trucks would make their regular rounds to the farms to gather the day's harvest of fruits and vegetables. Late at night or early in the morning the goods would be transported to the market, unloaded in the stalls, and sold to retailers. They would then charge the farmers for cartage and commission.

The number of retail fruit and vegetable stores, too, increased manifold since 1909, when it was reported as 20. In 1928, according to Kataoka's tabulation, they numbered 203; in 1939, according

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97. The Tolan Committee reports a higher figure. It states, "of 232 permanent stall operators in the open market yards, 134 were Japanese." (Ibid.)



to our estimate,<sup>98</sup> 309.

There were other trades in which the Japanese in Los Angeles were active. Florists, for example, numbered only a few in 1909, but increased to 74 in 1928 and fell to 65 in 1939. There were only a few nurseries selling flower plants and shrubs either retail or wholesale in 1909, but there were 69 such establishments in 1928, and 97 in 1939. In branches of personal service the growth of Japanese interests in hotel and lodging operations, the

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98. The Rafu Shimpo Yearbook lists fruit and vegetable stores and groceries combined as totaling 478. By separating the firms listed into ~~the~~ two groups, <sup>we</sup> ~~it is~~ estimated that the former numbered 309 and the latter 169. A higher figure is given in the statement submitted to the Tolan Committee by Sam Minami, Business Manager, Junior Produce Club of Los Angeles. He estimated that there were in Los Angeles County (including such cities as Long Beach, Santa Monica, Glendale, Pasadena, San Pedro) some 1,000 retail fruit and vegetable stores operated by Japanese in 1941. (U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, National Defense Migration, part 31, p. 11,724.) Another Japanese source reported the number of fruit and vegetable stores in Los Angeles in 1939 as 410. (The Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin Shi, p. 867.)



restaurant trade, and the cleaning and dyeing business was very rapid. In 1909 there were 90 hotels and lodging houses, only a few of which served white patrons. In 1928, however, the number had increased to 221; in 1939 to 361. A large majority of them catered to white patrons.<sup>99</sup> Cleaning and dyeing establishments increased from 16 in 1909 to 68 in 1928, to 90 in 1939. The number of restaurants serving American meals was reported for 1909 as 25, for 1928 as 108, and for 1939 as 126. In addition, the Japanese were able to gain a foothold in the restaurant trade serving Chinese meals and catered to white patronage, competing with Chinese-operated restaurants. These numbered 48 in 1928 and 75 in 1939.<sup>100</sup> The number of barber shops, on the other hand,

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99. A corroborating statement was given by Sam Minami to the Tolan Committee. (U.S. Congress, House. Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, op. cit., p. 11,725.) In 1941, he stated, there were 397 Japanese-operated hotels and apartments in Los Angeles County. Approximately 75 per cent of them catered to the general public. Ninety per cent of them were located in metropolitan Los Angeles.

100. Sam Minami stated that there were in 1941 some 350 Japanese-operated restaurants and cafes. "Approximately 80 per cent of these Japanese-operated restaurants and cafes cater to the American public. The majority of these cafes and restaurants are located near



increased from 44 in 1909, to 107 in 1928, but decreased to 60 in 1939.

In the twenties there were many shops which catered to non-Japanese, among whom Mexican Americans and Negroes were the more prominent, but by the thirties most of them had disappeared, and the shops had to depend mostly on Japanese patronage.

In all branches of business which catered to Japanese patronage the growth was slower; and in some, recession took place. For instance, the number of groceries in 1909 was reported by the Immigration Commission as 27, most of which catered to Japanese patrons. In 1939 the number of groceries meeting the special needs of Japanese increased but to 45 (34 retailers and 11 wholesalers.)<sup>101</sup> In 1909 there were 58 restaurants serving Japanese meals; in 1928, 65; in 1939, 52. The number of bath houses steadily declined from 26 in 1909 to 18 in 1928 and to 7 in 1939.

Engaged in these various branches of wholesale and retail  

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concentrated employment centers and cater exclusively to American trade." (Ibid.)

101. Kataoka reports only 23 "provision dealers" for 1928, but many of the 28 firms listed under "business corporations" are believed to be wholesalers of Japanese provisions. (op. cit.)



trade and personal services in Los Angeles were about half of the Japanese in all occupations, according to the Census for 1940.

They numbered 5,293 and were distributed as follows: 862 in whole-sale, 3,545 in retail, and 886 in personal services (exclusive of domestic service). The wholesaling and retailing of agricultural products was, as already ~~inferred~~<sup>implied</sup>, the most important sources of employment. According to our sampling,<sup>102</sup> 69 per cent of the Japanese in wholesale trades and 40 per cent of those in retail trades were engaged in the produce business. The extent of Japanese interests in the wholesale produce business can be appreciated by a statement submitted to the Congressional subcommittee. A representative of the organization, comprised of Japanese employees in the wholesale produce business, stated as follows:

[ A report from the Associated Produce Dealers and Brokers showed that there were a total of 84,958 carloads of produce handled by the total of American and Japanese firms during the year 1941. With the rate of \$500 per carload, the total produce handled by all the firms in the organization in both markets, the city market at Ninth and San Pedro Streets, and

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102. See Chapter, p.



the Terminal market at Seventh and Central Avenue, reaches a total of \$42,479,000. . . . .

An approximate and a very conservative survey of the total amount of business done by the Japanese produce firms show a total of \$26,470,761.47. This amount represents the total business of 20 Japanese produce houses plus the "yards" of both markets mentioned above. < A survey of the firms show a total of the business as \$15,760,761.47, and survey of the "yards" of both markets show a total of \$10,710,000 making the amount of both as shown above. > These amounts, however, do not take into consideration many of the firms not belonging to the association making this survey, nor does it take into consideration the amount of produce sold directly to the retailers by the farmers. ] May it be known that these amounts, also, represent a business done only in the two Los Angeles wholesale produce markets and does not consider the wholesale, shipping, and brokerage business done outside of the above-mentioned city.<sup>103</sup>

An estimate of the business volume and income of each of these firms for 1940 was reported by another officer of the organization. He roughly divided the commission houses into three classes according to the volume of business. In Group I were 6 houses with an

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103. Statement by Sam Minami. U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration. Ibid., part 31, p. 11,723.



estimated business of \$1,000,000 or over for 1940. Each of these houses employed an average of 30 persons. Some of them were operated under partnership of two or more persons. The income of each employer was between \$10,000 and \$50,000. In Group II were 8 houses doing business of more than \$500,000 and less than \$750,000. Each hired an average of 20 persons, and each employer earned somewhere between \$10,000 and \$20,000. Six commission houses were classified in Group III with an estimated business of less than \$500,000 for 1940. Each of these houses employed an average of 12 persons, and each employee's income was between \$5000 and \$15,000. In addition, about 30 of the Japanese merchants in the outside yards were doing considerable business, ranging from \$150,000 to \$400,000 annually. They usually employed more than 5 persons and less than 10 persons, and their individual incomes were estimated to be between \$5,000 and \$15,000 each.<sup>104</sup>

Most of the owners of wholesale produce firms were Issei, and

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104. Letter from an officer of the Junior Produce Club, Los Angeles, dated October, 1946.

(where?)  
to whom?



most of the employees were native-born. According to our sample, for example, 83 per cent of the proprietors were Issei, while ~~22~~ 62 per cent and 11 per cent of the employees were Nisei and Kibei, respectively. The level of positions held by the Issei employees did not significantly differ from that of the Nisei or the Kibei, unlike the situation found among the employees in Oriental art goods stores in San Francisco. Some 21 per cent of the Issei employees held managerial or supervisory positions compared to 13 per cent for the Nisei. Less Issei in proportion, however, held positions of great skill, such as salesmen and field buyers than Nisei; the proportion of salesmen and buyers among the Issei employees was 29 per cent, while the proportion among the Nisei employees was 38 per cent.<sup>105</sup> The Japanese firms, in addition, hired many Mexicans, Negroes, and other minorities, who usually

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105. In our sample, 106 persons were employed in wholesale produce establishments. Of them, 104 reported the positions they held. The distribution of positions by nativity is compiled in the following table:

|                                   | Issei    | Nisei    | Kibei    |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Manager                           | 6        | 8        | 2        |
| Salesman                          | 4        | 17       | 5        |
| Field Buyer                       | 4        | 7        | 1        |
| Cashier                           | 1        | 2        | 0        |
| Bookkeeper and other office clerk | 2        | 19       | 1        |
| Swamper and other floor worker    | 6        | 7        | 3        |
| Packer                            | 3        | 2        | 0        |
| Janitor                           | 2        | 0        | 0        |
|                                   | <hr/> 28 | <hr/> 62 | <hr/> 12 |



held positions of lower classification such as delivery boys and swampers.

Most frequently reported earnings per month of the employees in these wholesale firms were \$175-\$225 for managers; \$150-\$200 for salesmen; \$130-\$175 for field buyers; \$140-\$155 for cashiers; \$100-\$130 for swampers; and \$80-\$125 for bookkeepers and other clerical workers.<sup>106</sup>

In the retail produce business the Japanese contributed greatly to the development of modern merchandising methods in southern California. In the early days fruits and vegetables, and frequently meats, were sold by a grocer under one management. The operation of a profitable fruit and vegetable department, however, required many exacting duties. Daily buying trips to the wholesale market in the early hours; trimming, cleaning, and attractively displaying fruits and vegetables in order to stimulate sales, and constant care in order to eliminate wastage, called for a number of full-time employees. Many grocers thus could realize only marginal

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106. Fifty-six of the 106 employees in our sample reported their earnings.



profits from a produce business, and many others regarded it as an irksome operation.

The Japanese, meanwhile, had been regarded as more successful operators. They had gained among housewives a reputation of dependability. Japanese-operated stores had been known to stress fresh products and high quality for low prices. The earliest and simplest form of such stores was the roadside stand where Japanese farmers sold produce during season directly off their farms. On a little larger scale, Japanese had successfully operated markets which specialized in fruits and vegetables in outlying districts and sold locally grown farm products. In the city proper, too, many of the Japanese-owned groceries carried produce of better quality. With this background it was natural that Japanese gradually became strongly entrenched in the retail produce business. The growth of their holdings was spurred by the emergence of "super markets" in the nineteen twenties. Super markets introduced high specialization and segment<sup>al</sup>ization of the various departments that had been operated by grocers. The fruit and vegetable department evolved as an



independent concession that was leased out by the owner or the master-lease holder of super markets. Specialization also brought about a much more elaborate system of merchandise display. The department usually occupied the front section of the store, and rows of stands were placed one end to the other facing the street. On these stands cleanly washed and trimmed vegetables and polished fruits were expertly and decoratively piled. A frontage 100 feet long was not uncommon. Thus, in 1940 among Japanese-operated fruit and vegetable stores ranged from a little section in a grocery store to a large department in a gigantic market.

The proprietors of these stores had long been Issei, and a few of them ran chains of stores where Nisei and Kibei were employed in large numbers. In recent years, however, many of the native-born had risen from the rank of wage earner and had started on their own. Our sampling reveals that a higher proportion of native-born proprietors was found in the retail produce business than in any other trade. Some 61 per cent of the owners were Issei, while 22 per cent and 17 per cent were Nisei and Kibei, respectively. The employees



were predominantly native-born, Nisei representing 50 per cent of the Japanese employed in this trade and Kibei 22 per cent. Managerial positions were almost equally distributed among the foreign-born and the native-born; Issei managers constituted 20 per cent of the Issei employees, Nisei managers 17 per cent of the Nisei employees, and Kibei managers 18 per cent of the Kibei employees. The proportions of salesclerks in each group were 70 per cent, 63 per cent, and 74 per cent for the Issei, Nisei, and Kibei, respectively.<sup>107</sup> The records indicate that their monthly earnings were meager. For managers the income ranged from \$29-\$50 per week,

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107. The occupational distribution of the 254 Japanese employed full-time in <sup>ing</sup>retail stores of farm products in Los Angeles in 1940, based on our sampling, was as follows:

|            | Issei | Nisei | Kibei |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Manager    | 15    | 21    | 11    |
| Buyer      | 2     | 3     | 0     |
| Cashier    | 1     | 4     | 2     |
| Bookkeeper | 1     | 3     | 1     |
| Salesclerk | 50    | 92    | 42    |
| Laborer    | 2     | 3     | 1     |
|            | 71    | 126   | 57    |



and the most frequently reported rate was \$30-\$35 per week. For salesclerks the weekly rate ranged from \$15-\$33.50, but almost two out of three reported \$18-\$26 per week. There were also a number of Issei women, Nisei, and Kibei, who reported they were family workers.<sup>108</sup>

With respect to their educational background, a significant deviation from the average level of the native-born Japanese was found. They tended to enter this field while they were still in high school or soon after high school graduation. Our sampling reveals that among the native-born males in the retail produce business, born in 1915 or before, about one out of four had had some high school education and a half had been graduated from high school. There was less than one out of ten who had been college educated. That is, the proportion of the high school educated native-born

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108. Of the 254 employees, 162 reported their earnings. They are broken down by nativity as follows:

|                   | Issei     | Nisei     | Kibei     |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Earnings reported | 44        | 86        | 32        |
| No answer         | <u>27</u> | <u>40</u> | <u>25</u> |
| Total             | 71        | 126       | 57        |



males was higher and that of the college educated was lower than the corresponding averages of the native-born males engaged in all occupations in Los Angeles.<sup>109</sup>

It is also significant to note that there were many in-migrants engaged in this business, making a sharp contrast to those working in Oriental art goods stores in San Francisco. Of the 223 native-born Japanese so occupied in Los Angeles in April, 1940, according to our sample, only 23 per cent were born in Los Angeles and 14 per cent were from other localities in southern California, while 15 per cent had migrated from northern California. Those who had come from Washington and Oregon represented 19 per cent and those from Hawaii also 19 per cent.

*also  
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this  
business  
in LA?*

Working conditions in one of the better Japanese-operated fruit and vegetable stores are described by a Nisei in the following words:

In December, 1936, I got a job with the Royal Crown

109. The distribution of educational background of the 106 native-born males, born in 1915 or before, and engaged in retail fruit and vegetable trade in April, 1940 was as follows:

|                   |           | No. | %     |
|-------------------|-----------|-----|-------|
| Elementary school | 1-4 years | 1   | 0.9   |
| "                 | "         | 5   | 4.7   |
| "                 | "         | 9   | 8.5   |
| High school       | 1-3 years | 29  | 27.4  |
| "                 | "         | 53  | 50.0  |
| College           | 1-3 years | 8   | 7.6   |
| "                 | "         | 1   | 0.9   |
|                   |           | 106 | 100.0 |

Source: WRA Form No. 26



Produce Co. It had a branch office in Pasadena and the whole company was Japanese-owned. I worked there for four years in all. At the time I first started the store was just being opened in Pasadena and my brother worked for them during the opening day. He said that it was a little better than other fruit stand jobs so I asked for a steady job. I was getting tired of working as a truck driver for a wholesale produce dealer because the hours were very irregular and I started to get backaches. I wanted to get into something easier with regular hours. Another bad thing was that we were expected to work on the trucks until we were finished and I wasn't paid once for overtime or holidays during the period I worked there.

The Royal Crown store in Pasadena catered to the rich people of Pasadena because it was located in a pretty high-toned district. It was one of the best Japanese fruit stands down south and it was quite modernistic in design. Royal Crown Company had nine stores in all throughout the Los Angeles area and they made very good profits. It was one of the richer companies like this although there were others which had a much greater chain of stores. Royal Crown usually worked it in a regular system so that they took full advantage of Nisei employees. They would train a Nisei from a greenhorn position and work him right up. If he remained loyal to the company and worked hard, he might be made a manager of a new place which the company opened up. Of course, these positions of managers were not too numerous and it really wasn't much of a future although it did give the managers a certain amount of



prestige to rise above the clerk level. Many of these Japanese workers stayed with a company for years and years and never got promoted. Royal Crown employed many kinds of Japanese--Issei, Kibei, Nisei, Hawaiian-Nisei, Seattle-Nisei, and young kids from the farms. The original group which stuck with the company from the beginning in 1929 eventually was made manager of one of the stores and they got a salary of \$45 a week plus \$50 to \$100 bonus for Christmas.

Because we had such rich customers, I held the sales record for our store. I sold \$120 worth of produce in one day and I got a bonus for that. We used to race to see who could sell the most produce during the day and the competition was pretty keen. You had to have a good personality in order to please the customers. I used to make a lot of tips too and that is unusual. In most of the other fruit stands the customers never gave any tips. We had about 9 Nisei workers in our Pasadena store. I started out working there for \$21 a week and after three or four years worked up to \$27.50. We worked for our money too. I used to start work at 7:30 in the morning. The minute I got there I started to work and trim all the vegetables and fix the displays for the day. The fresh produce arrived from the wholesalers in Los Angeles as soon as we got to work so that we usually had to help unload the truck. The door would open around 9 and we would start waiting on the customers. Most of the customers came between 9 and 12. During noon we had to keep busy too as the working girls came in then to buy their vegetables. We took shifts for lunch and I usually



got from 1 or 1:30 until 2.

In the afternoon we would work on the displays again until about 3:30 as few people came in during that time. Between 3:30 and 6 we would usually have another rush of customers. Mondays and Saturdays were the heaviest days of the week for us. After this rush was over we would take down all of the perishable vegetables and put them in the refrigeration room. Around 7 or 7:30 we would be through for the day. It was pretty long working day and we earned our money. In some other stands the hours were even longer than that.<sup>110</sup>

A Nisei girl recounted her experience in a fruit and vegetable store as follows:

I worked in those fruit stands too in the nineteen thirties for a miserable \$15 a week. During those years of depression three-fourths of the Nisei fellows and girls in the labor market were in the produce market work. I did this kind of work for about a year and I found it most distasteful. It was hard work and the hours were long. The wage standards were horrible. Girls had to work 10 and 11 hours a day for about \$15 a week and we didn't get paid for overtime. After the Japanese workers organized a union, it was a little better because they didn't have to put in such long hours. I think the Japanese market owners took advantage of Nisei workers during the depression and they bled us for

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110. Case History No. 34.



everything they could. One company for which my brother worked made the men put in at least 14 hours a day but the pay checks gave them only credit for 8 hours. The fellows couldn't say very much about that because there were plenty of Nisei around who would have been ready to jump at the chance to take their jobs.

My boss was a fairly nice person because he had a conscience. He was a little more liberal in pay than some of the other employers. But I couldn't stand the frustrating fruit market work. I quit and got into a domestic job.<sup>111</sup>

In those branches of trades other than the produce business and its allied fields Issei were still predominantly active in 1940. For example, according to our sample, almost all the hotel owners and employees were Issei, while 86 per cent of the proprietors and 77 per cent of the employees of restaurants were also Issei.

As was the case in San Francisco, the number of Japanese employed by non-Japanese firms was small and those so employed usually held meager positions. Our sampling reveals that less than 7 per cent of all employees worked for Caucasians, and two out of three were Issei. The more frequently reported occupations were janitors

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111. Case History No. 59.



in department stores and kitchen helpers in restaurants and cafeterias for the Issei, and stock room clerks in department stores and apparel shops and dress makers for the Nisei girls.

Thus, for the Nisei joining the labor force, employment opportunities were much limited. They usually had to seek jobs within the Japanese community. A college educated Nisei quoted earlier described his plight and frustration in the following words:

The whole economic condition of the Japanese community was tottering before the war. The Jews were getting to take over the fruit stand work and they cut-rated on the Japanese in order to force them out of business. The Japanese community could not have lasted much longer or else they would have had to go more into domestic work. Everybody just couldn't get a job in the Japanese community. It just couldn't be self-sufficient. It turned out that in the Japanese community the people with the money from before kept on top and the average Japanese worker got poorer and poorer because more Nisei were coming of age to work. This meant that there was more competition for jobs and the wage level went down accordingly. The fruit stands were the main economy of Little Tokyo and that really was shaking. It seemed that a lot of the Nisei drifted into Los Angeles from other areas because they could not get any jobs in the smaller Japanese communities. This only made more



complications for the Nisei workers who were already there. There was plenty of unemployment among the Nisei before the war.

The Nisei hated to be forced into fruit stand racket but they could not help themselves. They couldn't do anything about it even if they were ambitious because the job openings for them were so limited. Great numbers of the Nisei had been going into college all along in order to postpone the time when they would finally have to go to work, but they didn't know what they would do when they did get out of school. The bulk of the Nisei were frustrated economically as they could not break through the barriers of the Japanese community. I was thinking that perhaps I could go to Louisiana some day to open up my own fruit stand business there, but that was only a dream.<sup>112</sup>

~~SMX~~ A reaction as cited above was in no way uncommon among the Nisei. Two more expressions of hopelessness are presented below. The first is the experience of a Nisei girl, and the second that of a young Nisei man. Both had had some college education in California.

I spent 3 or 4 years doing all sorts of jobs in the Japanese community. The Los Angeles Japanese community seemed to be stable and well organized on the surface and it had a



certain prosperous appearance due to the fruit stand and other business activities. But underneath this surface, it was a place of many frustrations for the Nisei because they just weren't getting any place. It was a battle of haves against the have-nots and the have-nots took the worst beatings. There weren't enough jobs to go around to everyone so that's why many Nisei went on to college in order to prolong the reality of the situation. None of them knew what to do after they got out of college because they couldn't use their training at all. The Japanese community absorbed a few of them, but the vast majority of the Nisei college graduates had to sidetrack themselves into other lines of work. Almost all of them were employed by Japanese businesses except the domestic workers. There were a few Nisei who became rather prominent in their fields of training but this only represented a small minority of the group. The majority were frustrated in economic activities and they didn't know what was going to happen to them next. They were seeking outlet but there didn't seem to be many possibilities. Many ambitions were crushed in this harsh existence. The Japanese there didn't concern themselves about trampling over others just so that they could get a little ahead. But even those who made a better go of it were blocked from going too far because the limitations of the Japanese community had a stranglehold on them. The Nisei group was too young to cope with this problem by themselves and I don't know what would have happened to them if the evacuation had not come along.<sup>113</sup>

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113. Case History No. 59.



Through a friend of mine, I was able to get a job with a wholesale importing company as a stockroom clerk, messenger boy and janitor combined. I did everything during the regular 9 hour working day and often uncredited overtime hours for a magnificent salary of \$60 a month. It was a Japanese company, of course, and very few of them paid any better than that. Sixty dollars a month was considered a very reasonable wage in those days.

I kept on working there for about six months until the company moved. Four or five other Nisei were hired so that I was promoted to be their foreman. I was given a \$5 a month raise. It was just manual work and there was nothing particularly interesting about it. This work continued for about 8 months. After that I was promoted to be a stock record clerk and claims adjuster and I was given \$70 a month. This placed me in the upper income group among the Issei since very few Nisei workers made as much as \$100 a month in those days.

I continued on with my work and I learned a little of business methods. I learned how to write proper business letters and I gained a little knowledge about import and export transactions. I was hardly contented and I wasn't entirely interested in the life cycle & I was living as the sense of personal frustration was greater than the amount of ambition I had. I didn't see how I could ever attain my goal. It was a most shallow existence. I felt an inner need for something more satisfying but I couldn't put my



finger on it. That's why I wandered into the various spheres of activities that I engaged in. This permitted me in a way to escape from realities. I escaped into things which were extremely non-material like music. I hoped that these things would give me some possibility for expression. But all this time I always had some kind of an inner urge to do something significant and meaningful but these plans had not crystalized yet due to the frustrating Japanese society in which I existed. The consciousness of the racial factor only entered into the sense of frustration and I didn't think in terms of overcoming it. It seems to me that it was too big a thing for one individual to solve. I just felt that the future might solve it in the natural course of time but I wasn't too hopeful about that. I just accepted my role in life and rebelled inwardly without doing anything about it. I tried to build up a false picture of life by engaging in various superficial activity as I felt that these things would give me the mental stimulation I desired.

Jobs for the Nisei were so scarce that it just wasn't conceived of that a Nisei could get a decent job working with a Caucasian company. It was one helluva plight and we didn't know how to cope with it. Most of the Nisei didn't give it a thought until they had completed their formal education. For a short period they rebelled but they quickly succumbed and took on the prevailing Nisei attitude of hopelessness because they had to cling to any kind of



job they could get.<sup>114</sup>

A common goal of many of the Nisei was to save enough money to open stores of their own. The operation of their own store was not always successful. The risk involved in running a fruit and vegetable store, for instance, is explained by a Nisei as follows:

All of the Nisei working in the fruit stands knew that that sort of work could only end in a manager of a Japanese chain store or else opening their own fruit stand. It only took a capital of between \$1,000 and \$2,000 to open up one's own fruit stand but it was a pretty risky business and quite a few folded up every year. The success of a fruit stand depended upon the location. The more fruit stands that opened, the less chance there was for success. Another thing was that the large Caucasian chain stores and Jewish stores were gradually pushing the Japanese out of this field. It was a very profitable business and it was run on credit mostly and everything was sold in cash so that the margin of profit was pretty big if the store was located in a good spot. If the store turned out good, other Nisei would be hired as clerks and the owner would begin to think of branching out with a chain of his own. Then the process would start all over again. But there was a lot of competition and the

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114. Case History No. 59.



number of failures each year was much greater than the successes.<sup>115</sup>

Difficulties involved in the operation of a store <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ told by the Nisei wife of a store owner in the following words:

The produce business seemed to be one of the few fields that an enterprising Japanese fellow could go into. A lot of the Japanese were going into the florist business also because there was nothing else for them to do. My husband had just started a produce store of his own in Hollywood in the late part of 1940. It was quite a large store and he hired about 6 or 8 Nisei workers. I had quit my job as an interior decorator to devote most of my time in helping out my husband in his work.

Starting a produce market is very hard work and it takes a lot of courage to start out with practically no financial backing. My husband had his heart in this work so that he didn't mind the long hours he put into it. He would get up at 3:00 in the morning and work right through to night. We didn't mind working hard because it was for our future security. We were hoping that the store would turn out to be a success.

There seemed to be some sort of a boycott developing against Japanese stores. My husband became aware of it because his business got worse and worse in sales. It was very discouraging coming at a time when we had not had an opportunity to get on our feet yet. It was a sort of



unofficial boycott and we didn't know the exact reason for it. We just felt that there was something in the air because of the general uneasiness which seemed to exist. All of our savings had been invested so that we were pretty worried because it meant our livelihood.

Immediately after the outbreak of the war, all Japanese property and financial assets were frozen. My husband was not able to buy anything at the wholesale produce market so that the condition of our store grew even more precarious. Our own bank turned out to be dubious of us and it felt that it was too risky to extend us further credit so that made us feel very badly. We finally realized that we were involved by war so that my husband concluded that it would be absolutely useless to continue struggling along with produce market. It was the end of our dreams. My husband began to dispose of the truck and store equipment at sacrifice prices below the actual cost.<sup>115</sup>

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115. Case History No. 55.



In Seattle, as shown in Table 100, Japanese-owned establishments numbered 874 in 1930 and 881 in 1936, more than doubled since 1909. It is believed, however, that the number had reached a maximum sometime earlier, probably in the beginning of the nineteen twenties, and had decreased somewhat since then. As in San Francisco, these changes followed definite patterns, i.e., those set up for general trade on the whole increased, while those for Japanese trade declined appreciably. Among the former, rapid progress was noted, for example, in retail produce and grocery business. Most of the 26 groceries that the Immigration Commission reported for 1909 were located within a small area where Japanese were concentrated and catered to both Japanese and non-Japanese patrons. In 1930 Japanese-operated <sup>stores</sup> ~~groceries~~ numbered 100 and in 1936, 123. In 1942, according to the statement of the Seattle Chapter of the JACL, submitted to the Tolson Committee, the number ~~and~~ increased to 140, representing 16-2/3 per cent of the total number in the city. "More than 95 per cent of the stores are in localities outside the Japanese community. Stores located within



the Japanese community and those bordering on it now average between 30 and 40 per cent of their sales to the Caucasian trade. . . . Japanese stores located definitely in Caucasian residential and business districts are practically 100 per cent dependent on Caucasian trade."<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the survey of the Immigration Commission that has been quoted earlier, there were in 1942 a number of larger establishments with greater capital investments and business volume. The JACL report stated that investment in these stores ranged from \$700 to \$18,000 and averaged \$3,500 per store. Their aggregate transactions were \$294,000 per month, an average of \$25,200 per year. The larger establishments employed "as many as five or six clerks and are in most cases located in shopping centers," while the smaller stores were operated by families and the medium-sized ones employed "extra help for delivery and general work in the store."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Statement by Emergency Defense Council, Seattle Chapter, Japanese-American Citizens League. U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration. Hearing. 77th Congress, 2d Session. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1942, pt. 30, p. 11,460.

2. Ibid.



Retail fruit and vegetable stores had also become numerous. There were 61 such stores in 1930 and 45 in 1936. Most of these were, however, stands or stalls in the municipally-owned public markets along the water front. In the beginning Japanese were most numerous in the public markets, but in the more recent years had been outnumbered by Italians and other south Europeans.

Rapid expansion was also noted in the hotel business and in the cleaning and dyeing trade. The former increased from 72 in 1909 to 157 in 1930 and 177 in 1936. For 1941 and 1942 the number reported by two sources is at variance. The JACL reported the number of hotels in 1942 as 206 and that of apartments as 56. It was claimed by them that "almost two-thirds of the hotels in Seattle are being operated by resident Japanese."<sup>1</sup> <sup>a?</sup> The banking interest, on the other hand, reported that "in 1941 there were 181 hotels, rooming houses, and small apartments being conducted by the Japanese."<sup>2</sup> Most of them were in the cheaper price scale and were

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1. Ibid.

2. Statement by J.W. Spangler, Seattle First National Bank. U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration. Hearing. 77th Congress, 2d Session. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1942, pt. 30, p. 11,418.



patronized chiefly by the laboring class. They were located in the Japanese community and its contiguous areas, the low-class part of the downtown district. Since national defense production was accelerated, these Japanese-operated hotels, due to their proximity to industrial and shipping centers, were doing prosperous business with non Japanese.

The Japanese, however, owned few of these hotel buildings and land. The bank executive stated:

Normally, so far as I know, there are very few of these hotels operated by the Japanese where the real property is owned by the operating company or the individual. There are two rather prominent hotels, considering the type and the group, that are owned by the Japanese. . . . Therefore, that leaves the operator being the owner of the equipment and furniture. Most of the property, therefore, is leased.<sup>1</sup>

The capacity of these hotels varied "from 7 to 440, with a total estimated capacity of 10,557,"<sup>2</sup> according to the Caucasian source, while the Japanese organization reported the total number of rooms

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1. Statement by J.W. Spangler, op. cit., p. 11,419.

2. Ibid., p. 11,418.



to be 15,059.<sup>1</sup> By either of the two estimates, however, the average number of rooms per hotel was approximately 60. The majority were thus "comparatively small places, profitable only if operated by the manager and his wife, with the aid of the family and a minimum of outside help."<sup>2</sup>

The number of cleaning and dyeing establishments also increased from 45 in 1909 to 95 in 1930 and 107 in 1936. The total for 1942 of 90, as reported by JACL, seems to indicate some decline in the few years prior to evacuation. These represented "about 22 per cent of all dye works and cleaning establishments" and averaged "a total of 12,169 customers each month, or about 140 per month per shop."<sup>3</sup> Only a small portion of these customers were Japanese. The bulk of these shops were located "in low-income areas of the city. None of them is on a scale to rival the large white American firms."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Statement by Emergency Defense Council, Seattle Chapter, Japanese-American Citizens League, op. cit., p. 11,459.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 11,460.

4. Ibid.



These were, "with few exceptions, purely family enterprises with small capital investments."<sup>1</sup> In recent years shops were opened in better, more recently developed neighborhoods.

No significant changes were noted in other major branches of Japanese-operated business for non Japanese patronage. For instance, the number of restaurants serving American meals was 36 in 1909, 39 in 1930, and 42 in 1936. These restaurants approximated the location and patronage of the Japanese-operated hotels and specialized usually in serving fair meals for low prices.

Among those branches of business designed primarily for Japanese patronage, the most notable decline was observed in the number of restaurants serving Japanese meals, a decrease from 51 in 1909 to 24 in 1930 and 16 in 1936. The number of bath houses decreased from 26 in 1909 to 5 in 1930 and 3 in 1936, while there were only 15 <sup>stores</sup> ~~groceries~~ dealing in Japanese provisions in 1936.

In wholesale, retail, and personal service (exclusive of domestic service) trades, the Census for 1940 counted 1,920 Japanese, representing 62.2 per cent of the Japanese in all occupations in

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1. Ibid.



Seattle.<sup>1</sup> The distribution of these Japanese by sex and nativity is shown in the following table.

TABLE

Distribution of Japanese in Seattle in 1940 Engaged in Wholesale, Retail, and Personal Services, (Except Domestic Service) by Sex and Nativity

|   | Native-born |        | Foreign-born |        | Total |
|---|-------------|--------|--------------|--------|-------|
|   | Male        | Female | Male         | Female |       |
| Wholesale trade                         | 68          | 25     | 83           | 23     | 199   |
| Retail trade                            | 219         | 163    | 508          | 214    | 1,104 |
| Personal Services<br>(Excl. Dom. Serv.) | 65          | 51     | 309          | 192    | 617   |
| Total                                   | 352         | 239    | 900          | 429    | 1,920 |

Source: U.S. Census for 1940

In order to obtain more detailed information on their economic and occupational status, a sampling was taken of the WRA interview records of those Japanese who were evacuated from Seattle and who were engaged in some occupation in the city in April, 1940. The result contained 795 Japanese who were born in 1921 or before and worked full-time. The distribution by industry, employment status, and nativity is compiled in Table 101.

1. U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of Census. 16th Census.



According to our sampling there were 80 in the wholesale trade, 316 in the retail trade, and 179 in personal services other than domestic service. As shown in the following table, there were 373 foreign-born Japanese and 201 native-born, or 65 per cent to

TABLE

Employment Status of 529 Japanese (Born in 1921 or Before) in Seattle, April, 1940, Engaged Full-time in Wholesale, Retail, and Personal Service Trades, Except Domestic Service

|       | Proprietors |       | Employees |       | Total |       |
|-------|-------------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
|       | No.         | %     | No.       | %     | No.   | %     |
| Issei | 178         | 78.1  | 195       | 56.4  | 373   | 65.0  |
| Nisei | 43          | 18.8  | 122       | 35.3  | 165   | 28.7  |
| Kibei | 7           | 3.1   | 29        | 8.3   | 36    | 6.3   |
| Total | 228         | 100.0 | 346       | 100.0 | 574   | 100.0 |

Source: WRA Form No. 26.

35 per cent,<sup>1</sup> and were divided into 228 proprietors and 346 employees, or 40 per cent to 60 per cent. There were more Issei among both the

1. According to the U.S. Census for 1940, the percentages of the foreign-born and the native-born in the male Japanese population, between 20 years and 59 years of age, in Seattle, were 63.8 per cent and 36.2 per cent, respectively. The ratio was very similar to that in San Francisco, where the percentages for the corresponding age group were 62.3 per cent for the foreign-born and 37.7 per cent for the native-born. A significant deviation was, however, found in Los



entrepreneurs and the employees, 78 per cent among the former and 56 per cent among the latter. In some branches of Japanese-operated businesses Issei were more predominant. In the hotel and rooming house trade, for instance, Issei represented 90 per cent of the proprietors and 77 per cent of the employees. In the restaurant business, too, 80 per cent of the proprietors and 70 per cent of the employees were Issei. In some other branches of business, such as <sup>stores</sup> ~~groceries~~, wholesale produce houses, and retail fruit and vegetable stores, Nisei employees were in the majority in recent years. In the grocery business, for example, 70 per cent of the employees were native-born, although the foreign-born still represented 67 per cent of the proprietors.

With respect to the number of Japanese engaged, the grocery and restaurant trades and the hotel and rooming house operations were the most important. According to our sample, in the <sup>stores</sup> ~~groceries~~ and restaurants were found 27 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, of the Japanese engaged in retail trades. In the operation of hotels Angles, where the foreign-born represented 57.5 per cent and the native-born 42.5 per cent for the corresponding age group. The difference seems to substantiate many documentary evidences that the Nisei moved to Los Angeles and its vicinity to find jobs.



and rooming houses 54 per cent of the Japanese were engaged in personal service trades (exclusive of domestic service). That is, more than a half of the Japanese in retail and personal service trades were either operators of or working in grocery stores, restaurants, and hotels and rooming houses. As already pointed out, the proprietors of these establishments relied heavily on family help to operate their business. Of those employees in Japanese-operated groceries<sup>stores</sup> and hotels who reported their earnings, 56 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively, declared themselves to be "unpaid family labor." Among the restaurant (Japanese-operated) employees reporting their income, only 11 per cent were family workers. Nevertheless, when part-time workers, such as children still attending school, are taken into consideration, the scope of Japanese business on a family basis can easily be appreciated.

The wages of employees other than family members were meager and their working hours long. Our sample reveals that in the grocery business about one-third earned more than \$75 but less than \$100 per month, one-third more than \$50 but less than \$75, and one-third less



than \$50. Similarly, in the hotel, apartment, and rooming house business, only a few of employees received more than \$75 per month, while one-half of the rest received more than \$50 but less than \$75 per month, and the remaining half less than \$50. It is believed, however, that most of these employees received free room in addition to cash remuneration. In the restaurant trade, wages were slightly higher. About one-half received more than \$75, but only a few of them more than \$100, and the other half earned less than \$75. Some of those receiving lower wages reported room and board in addition. With respect to working hours, no reliable data are available. Many Japanese, however, claimed that a work week of 54-60 hours was not uncommon. One informant who had worked in a fruit stand in the municipal market stated that although he worked from 4:30 in the morning until 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon he was regarded as a part-time worker and received part-time wages.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Japanese-operated establishments in 1940 were still in Issei-controlled, and the majority of jobs in these places were held

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1. Case History No. 21.



by the older generation. Opportunities for the native-born were indeed limited and the process of replacing Issei employees was slow. Even in grocery and produce stores, where more and more Nisei were finding employment in recent years, wage scales and working conditions were not attractive. A large number of Nisei were found working for their families, and would eventually have inherited their parents' establishments.

In Seattle, in contrast to San Francisco, a higher percentage of Japanese had positions in Caucasian-operated establishments. Table 102 shows the distribution of the 346 employees in wholesale, retail, and personal service trades other than domestic service, obtained in our sampling. It reveals that 26 per cent of Japanese workers in these trades were employed by Caucasians, as compared to 16 per cent in San Francisco. The percentages of Issei and Kibei workers in Caucasian-operated firms in Seattle were only slightly higher than the corresponding percentages in San Francisco, but the percentage of similarly employed Nisei was significantly higher. In Seattle one out of five Nisei in these trades was employed in



Caucasian firms, while less than one out of ten was similarly employed in San Francisco.

Types of jobs held by these Japanese were, as in San Francisco, of menial nature. The more common positions among the male were janitors and porters in stores; cooks, kitchen helpers, and dishwashers in restaurants and lunch counters. Their pay scales were a little higher than those of similar positions in Japanese-operated establishments. Most of the janitors and porters, for instance, earned \$100 - \$130, most cooks \$120 - \$150, and most kitchen helpers \$95 - \$130. There were many women who were employed as common laborers in processing and repairing of gunny sacks. There were other men and women who were common laborers in wholesale fish markets and in glove manufacturing factories. Some men were also employed as porters in railroad stations.

Thus the Nisei coming into the labor market encountered difficulties in finding employment, not only in Caucasian operated firms but within the Japanese Community. As one Nisei young man put it,

. . . the prospects for the Nisei future in Seattle were very small. There were many Nisei still in colleges, and



they didn't know what they could do after graduation. They talked about going to Japan for economic opportunity, but very few went. Most of them stayed behind and did menial jobs or else shifted to Los Angeles. For example, I knew a Nisei pharmacist who was working as a houseboy in Seattle because he could not get anything in his line. There were many, many cases of this sort. It was getting to be a great problem just before the war, and the Nisei were talking about it a lot.<sup>1</sup>

Another Nisei young man described limited employment opportunities in the following words:

It was quite a problem for all of the Nisei, since they did not know what they could do after they get out of school. The problem had not really come out into the open yet, since the large mass of Nisei were still in school. We thought about it a lot but it was one of those unanswerable questions and it was much easier not to think about it. We always put it off and said that we would find the answer when the time for it came. . . . I was restless at that time, because I had no definite occupational plans for the future. I was still feeling around. I wanted to get into some business, but I really did not know. I thought about it a lot but it only caused me to worry so I put it out of my mind. I figured I was getting along fairly well at the time and my salary as a seaman was not bad, since I was getting \$115 a month plus room and board

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1. Case History No. 21.



on the boat. I was finished with college as I had my A.B. degree and I was not thinking of any further education. I was mixed in my feelings and I did not know that Seattle would ever offer me economic opportunities. I had vague ideas of going east for a try. . . . The Old Guard was so far behind the times that they were still talking about linking the bridge between the United States and Japan. They had no concept of the economic situation of the Nisei and it was rather disgusting when they passed off the economic situation of the Nisei by saying that they could get jobs easily. The professional Nisei were in power over the Japanese community, and they were strongly aligned with the Old Guard. They had to be that way because they were getting support and money from them. That is why the Old Guard wasted their efforts instead of tackling the immediate problem which faced the Nisei who were beginning to come out of school in large numbers. The professional Nisei thought that it would be easy to get placed just because they had fitted into the Japanese community. They were lucky, because some of the Issei professional men were dying off just about the time they came on the scene. The Old Guard did not realize that the younger Nisei coming up would have a much harder time.<sup>1</sup>

Facing these difficulties a large number of Nisei in recent years sought seasonal employment in the Alaskan fish canneries as

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1. Case History No. 17.



a reliable source of income. Many of them had worked in these canneries during school vacations, and had resumed this work at least as stop-gap employment until they could find something better. In 1941, according to the JACL report, there were 350 Nisei who went from Seattle to Alaska to work in the canneries. Together with 150 Issei, they constituted about one-sixth of the total cannery workers. They were engaged in processing, canning, labeling, and longshoring in the salmon-canning industry. Their work lasted about two months, and their gross income averaged about \$400.<sup>1</sup>

Oriental laborers were traditionally employed in the Alaska canneries. In the beginning Chinese were most numerous, and later were supplanted by Japanese immigrants, similar to the pattern of farm laborers and railroad workers in the West. In the nineteen thirties, Nisei students regarded employment in Alaska during vacations a fine opportunity to save money to attend school. Since the middle of the thirties Filipinos had begun to outnumber the

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1. Statement by Emergency Defense Council, Seattle Chapter, Japanese-American Citizens League, op. cit., pp. 11,461-11,462.



Japanese in the industry. As there were labor contractors for farm workers and railroad workers, these cannery laborers were hired through contractors, mostly Chinese and Japanese.

Usually a cannery operator told a contractor that on a specific date some 250 men would be needed at a certain cannery. The contractor supplied not only the men but also their food. Thus he stood directly between the operator and the labour group and there was no point of contact whatsoever between the employer and the employee. The Japanese foremen were, of course, the chosen friend of the contractor.<sup>1</sup>

The cannery workers were not unionized until 1935, and under these conditions,

all the traditional Japanese attitudes of loyalty, friendliness, and indebtedness found fertile soil for persistence. The employees were indebted to the contractor for their jobs and when they were financially pressed, he carried them, deducting the loans from later earnings. Many of the issei, accustomed to such paternalistic arrangements, saw no cause for complaint. . . . But when more nisei and Filipinos entered the canneries, there was considerable unrest and dissatisfaction. Some of the older nisei disliked the poor food, poor pay, and poor sleeping quarters, but felt unable

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1. Forrest E. LaViolette, Americans of Japanese Ancestry, Toronto, 1945, p. 93.



to do anything about it. To reject what the contractor provided simply meant losing the job.<sup>1</sup>

A Nisei young man, who later unionized the cannery workers, described his own experience in the following words:

I had to finance my own way through college, and most of my money was made in the Alaska canneries during the summer. . . . A friend of my dad ran an employment agency to supply Japanese labor for the Alaska cannery work. He was quite successful doing this and he made a lot of money. He was one of the persons who could decide who would go up to work in the cannery. In a way it was quite a racket, because usually they took a big cut from the earnings of the workers they sent up as part of their commission. Jobs were rather scarce during the depression so that many of the Japanese were anxious to get these cannery jobs for several months of the year. That is why many of the Japanese contractors could ask for such a big cut. . . . I went up for the first time in 1934.

At that time the cannery workers were all non-union. I did not protest at the low wages the first year I went up, because I did not know how it could be done. After the second summer I went up, the Japanese foreman got too dominating and I could not take it at all. He expected us to crawl to him and I began to see that the workers were being exploited too much. Another fellow and I began to fight back.

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1. Ibid.



It happened that they had promised me a wage of \$60 a month plus my room and board, but they would only give me \$55. They said the other \$5 had been taken for some kind of fee, but they would not explain exactly what it was. I decided that I was going to make a fight of it even if the Japanese black-balled me.

When I got back from Alaska to Seattle, I felt that something should be done so that the Japanese workers would not be exploited by these Japanese contractors. I decided to bring a complaint to the union which was just starting out. . . . The union became interested in my case, and they got my extra \$5 a month for me. I was on the outs with the Japanese contractor after that, and he said that he would see that I would never have an opportunity to do cannery work again. Therefore, I began to take an interest in the union. This was against the thinking of the Japanese community that had the opinion that all unions were radical, but I felt that this was the only way to fight these contractors. I became one of the nucleus of the Japanese Cannery Workers' Union, which later developed. . . . It was in the general union which we organized. It included Mexicans, Filipinos, Chinese, and Japanese. At first, we were affiliated with the A.F. of L., which would only give us a Federal charter. It was a sort of Jim Crow set-up. . . . It was our function to keep the organization smoothly and to make better contracts for the workers. We had quite a struggle with the old Japanese contractors who formerly controlled the situation. The struggle went on for a



couple of years, but it was a losing battle for them. They began to blackball me more and more, but by that time the unions were getting too powerful. The C.I.O. was getting stronger and stronger, and we had become affiliated with it. . . .

By 1940 the union was very strong and we managed organize 100 per cent. In the cannery work alone, we managed to raise the average wage level from \$35 a month in 1933 to over \$115 a month plus room and board by 1940. Of course, the depression days had a lot to do with the extremely low wages for the cannery workers around 1933, but the wages only climbed slowly after that, and it did not go up rapidly until the union got in. We also managed to get the working hours lowered from 10 hours a day to 8 hours. This was more of the American standards. Another thing was that the union improved the payment for overtime work from 20 cents an hour to 60 cents. Other improvements were in living and working conditions, and we also managed to get bargaining power.<sup>1</sup>

Although conditions were thus vastly improved, employment in the Alaska canneries was still unsatisfactory as a permanent means of livelihood for the Nisei. The only more hopeful avenues for the future were (1) finding new Caucasian employers, (2) starting businesses of their own, but catered<sup>ing</sup> to a general clientele, and (3) seeking employment in some cities other than Seattle. None of these was, however, an easy or practical solution for the Nisei.

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TABLE

53  
Monthly Earnings of ~~52~~ Nisei (born in 1921 or before)  
Employed in Oriental Art Goods Stores, San Francisco, 1940

|                 | <u>Male</u> | <u>Female</u> |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| Less than \$50  | 0           | 2             |
| \$50 - \$59     | 2           | 5             |
| \$60 - \$69     | 3           | 7             |
| \$70 - \$79     | 5           | 11            |
| \$80 - \$89     | 4           | 1             |
| \$90 - \$99     | 3           | 2             |
| \$100 - \$149   | 4           | 0             |
| More than \$150 | <u>34</u>   | <u>0</u>      |
|                 | 24 25       | 28            |

The disproportionate earnings between males and females is explained partly by the fact that many of the Nisei males either held managerial positions or were salesmen in wholesale trades and received commissions in addition to their regular salaries.

There were also 18 Issei and 3 Kibei employed in Oriental art goods stores. The educational level of these Issei workers (15 males and 3 females) was higher than found in most other occupations, all except 1 had had some high school education or higher in Japan, 4 being college educated. The Issei males held higher positions on the whole, 10 reporting themselves as managers. Their monthly wages were therefore higher; of 13 Issei reporting, only 2 received less than \$100; 6, more than \$100 but less than \$150; and 5, more than \$150. The Issei females, however, received wages similar to those earned by the Nisei females: with two reporting, one earned \$60 per month and the other \$75.

There were 18 Issei, 1 Nisei, and 1 Kibei tabulated in the