## OPPOSING IMMIGRATION

*TheV a n c o u v e r Riot*

Opposition to immigration from Asia was widespread in British Columbia at the beginning of the twentieth century. What was the source of this prejudice? How was it exhibited?

***1858*** *The first Chinese immigrants to Canada arrive in BC to seek gold on the Fraser River.*

***1875*** *Chinese lose the vote in provincial and federal elec­tions; they do not regain it until 1947.*

***1880-85*** *Thousands of Chinese labourers arrive to work on railway construction.*

***1885*** *The first head tax is imposed on Chinese immi­grants. The tax has to be paid before a Chinese per­son is allowed into the country. It begins at $50, but eventually rises as high as $500.*

***1911*** *The Chinese population in British Columbia is 20 000.*

***1923*** *July 1st the head tax is abolished, but it is replaced by restrictions that stop virtually all Chinese immi­gration to Canada. This day is known to Chinese Canadians as "Humiliation Day."*

***1939-45*** *500 Chinese-Canadian soldiers fight for the Allies in the Second World War.*

***1947*** *Chinese Canadians regain the vote, and some of the restrictions on immigration are lifted.*

***1967*** *Restrictions on Chinese immigration are removed entirely.*

***1991*** *There are 586 645 Canadians of Chinese background, amounting to 2.17 per cent of the population.*

***Hostile Relations***

*On the evening of 7 September 1907, a large crowd gathered out­side city hall in Vancouver. The meeting was called to protest immi­gration from China, Japan, and India. Several speakers gave inflam­matory speeches arguing that the newcomers were taking jobs from local residents.*

***Timeline: Chinese Immigration to Canada***

*While the speeches continued, a mob of several hundred people marched to the Chinese and Japanese sections of the city. They began throwing stones through the windows of shops and businesses. People on the street were beaten. The violence lasted for four hours, until Japanese-Canadian residents drove the rioters away.*

*The Vancouver riot showed just how bad relations were between the majority of residents in BC, who were British and American in back­ground, and the Asian newcomers. In response to this tension, govern­ments passed a series of laws aimed at restricting the number of Asian immigrants to British Columbia.*

***What Caused the Riot?***

*Like most events, the Vancouver riots had more than one cause. Historians describe several factors that led to the events in 1907.*

*1. The number of immigrants from Japan and India increased sud­denly early in the year.*

*2. Rumours spread that there was a scheme to flood BC with cheap Asian workers. Labour unions worried that their members would lose jobs to the newcomers.*

*3. It was feared that Asian new­comers were so successful at business that they would soon control the economy.*

*4. British Columbians resented the fact that Asian immigrants*

*worked for lower wages and they believed this limited their own job opportunities.*

*5. British Columbians did not believe that the federal govern­ment was sympathetic to their concerns about immigration.*

*6. Speakers at the gathering outside city hall ignited their audiences with their strong demands for an end to Asian immigration.*