

House of Representatives U. S.  
Washington, D. C.

April 21, 1916.

Mr. Herbert Hunt,  
c/o Tacoma Daily News,  
Tacoma, Washington.

My dear Mr. Hunt:

I have your note of April 13th asking me for some detailed information about the Chinese Expulsion. You ask who wrote the resolution appointing the Committee of Fifteen. Frankly, I do not know. I feel quite sure that I did not do it but I am inclined to think that Ren Taylor may remember better than I who did it. I was not on the committee as it was first organized. I was drawn on it later but I was on the Committee on the day of the expulsion and was with the members of the Committee all that day from the time the whistle blew before noon until the last act in the evening.

To be quite frank with you I did not know the Chinese were to be expelled from Tacoma that day until the whistle blew and the crowd began to gather. I well remember that Meyer Kaufman came to me as soon as he heard the whistle blowing and he saw the people coming toward us and said to me in his excitable way "My God, Wickersham, there is going to be trouble here today. Are they going to put the Chinaman out of town?" I assured him that I did not know and that I was as ignorant that there was a plan already arranged as he was. Kaufman and I staid together all day and he was exceedingly nervous. He ran a large drygoods store in Tacoma and he felt just as I did that if by any accident or through any disorder on account of drunken men or otherwise some Chinaman should be killed or some serious matter of that kind happen ~~that~~ the Committee of Fifteen would be on the road to Walla Walla. With this horrible vision before us all day we certainly did what we could to protect the Chinamen from imposition and assault and did the best we could to protect their property from destruction. We sympathized with their willingness to remove themselves and their property to Portland and we greatly desired to have it done in such a way that we would not be compelled to retire to the privacy of a cell at Walla Walla, McNeil's Island, or some other quiet retreat. Luckily we managed to control

the situation during the day and while we were all indicted many times and had some interviews with the United States Marshal backed by United States troops we did escape sequestration of our persons as guests of the government.

I have always felt that we did a great and good work for the Pacific coast that day. There are on the Pacific Coast of Asia millions of Chinese and even Japanese who would flood the Pacific coast if the bars were once lowered. I never objected to the Chinese because of their criminal activities or their immorality but rather the reverse. They appear to me to be a very hard-working, industrious and honest people. However, their system of development under intense suppression has made them much more to be feared than if they were criminals. A Chinaman can live on what an American family would throw from its table. He and every member of his family would work from early in the morning till late at night and live in a very modest hut. The fear I have always had was not that the Pacific coast would be overrun by criminals and a foreign race of base and immoral character but that we would be confronted by millions of industrious hard-working sons and daughters of Confucius who, if given an equal chance with our people, would outdo them in the struggle for life and gain possession of the Pacific coast of America. For that reason I have always objected to the Chinese coming into the United States and into competition with our people. We can not compete with them, not because of their baser qualities, but because of their better qualities. I am yet just as much opposed to their entrance into competition with our people on the Pacific coast as I was at the time of their expulsion by the Committee of Fifteen but I am not afraid to do them the credit of saying that I fear their good qualities much more than I do their bad ones.

You ask me who usually presided as chairman of the Committee of Fifteen's meetings. My recollection is that it was E. G. Bacon, although Big Jake Ralph and our mutual friend A. U. Mills were always present. I have a large picture of a group of the men who were indicted showing more than fifteen. As a matter of fact something like thirty-five or forty men were indicted although not all of the Committee of Fifteen. The picture I have was taken at the corner of old C and Eleventh street. Of course, this picture was

taken before any of the big buildings that stand there now were erected.

I regret that I do not know exactly what you want so I am unable to give you as many facts as I am sure you would like to have nor as many as I could give you if I was present and could talk to you about it.

I have just read the clipping from the News of April 18th under the heading "Tacoma holds 'Open Forum' on old expulsion of Chinese". I think you made a very fair statement of the reasons for expelling the Chinese from Tacoma at that time. I remember meeting with the men who organized the Committee of Fifteen over Weisbach's store building on Pacific Avenue.

Very truly yours,

*James W. Rusham*

Delegate from Alaska.

