

# Chinese Labourers.

Andrew Onderdonk estimated that he needed at least 10,000 men to build his section of the railway from Port Moody to Eagle Pass. His solution of bringing workers from China horrified the racist population of British Columbia. The BC government tried to ban the Chinese, but Prime Minister John A. Macdonald knew, "either you must have this



labour or you can't have the railway." Onderdonk paid the Chinese less, only a dollar a day, forced them to buy all their supplies from the company store, and made them build their own camps. All this they agreed to do, for the money they saved would serve them for life in China.

There were concerns for the slight build of the Chinese, but Onderdonk reasoned that if they could build the Great Wall, they could surely build a railway. In 1881-82 Onderdonk shipped at least 6000 workers from Hong Kong. The railway would not have been built without them.

Death was far more frequent among the Chinese than the other groups. The litany of death reads "crushed by a log," "killed by falling rock," "drowned," "smothered by cave-in" and of course death by explosion. Scores also died of scurvy, 200 in the first year alone. They received little notice or medical care.

1) Why were Chinese labourers brought over?  
to help build the CPR.

2) What was the reaction of BC residents?

- Horrified.

- Scared of having Chinese over.

3) What concerns were there about the Chinese as workers?

- Not much.

- "If they can build the Great Wall they can build a railroad."

4) What occurred more frequently among Chinese labourers than other workers?

- Death.

5) What response was there to this?

- They receive little notice or medical care.