"THE CHINESE MUST GO!" COMMISSIONER GENERAL POWDERLY AND CHINESE IMMIGRATION, 1897-1902

by Delber L. McKee*

PROBABLY THE most important labor leader to come from Pennsylvania—and a national figure of some prominence in his day—was Terence V. Powderly, who gained fame primarily as head of the Knights of Labor from 1879 to 1893. While his career was many-faceted, little attention has been given to the time when he was commissioner general of immigration. This is understandable, because by then he seemed to be out of the labor movement and to be drifting into the twilight period of his career. Appearances were deceiving, however. That interval, which is given only a cursory treatment in his autobiography, contains a number of surprises when looked into more carefully.

This particular stage in Powderly's lifetime has significance not only in terms of the man's own mark in history but also in relation to labor history and America's changing policy on immigration. The early 1900s, one should remember, was a time when floods of immigrants were pouring into the United States and when Americans were loudly debating whether to continue the old system of open immigration or change to a new and limited one. Whoever happened to be head of the Bureau of Immigration was strategically placed for recommending and implementing policy in that critical period.

One of the most important assignments of the Bureau of Immigration at the turn of the century, and one that consumed a great deal of Powderly's energies, was the administration of the laws pertaining to Chinese immigrants. In examining this area of Powderly's jurisdiction, one can easily demonstrate that (1) Powderly was still a force to be reckoned with, (2) he continued to identify himself with the labor movement and make a contribution to it, and (3) he was able

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to exert considerable influence over the nation's immigration policy.

One should note that Powderly came to his post as commissioner general by way of a curious chain of events. After having been grand master of the Knights of Labor until 1893, he returned to the practice of law in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he had at one time been mayor. With the arrival of the spirited presidential campaign of 1896, however, he plunged into politics with great enthusiasm and traveled to distant cities to speak before labor audiences on behalf of William McKinley. The Republican standard bearer was grateful for this much-needed help among laboring people against the eloquent William Jennings Bryan and, soon after he became president, received and approved the application of Powderly for the immigration post. Despite some reluctance by the Senate to confirm him, Powderly assumed the office on 3 August 1897.¹

The former labor leader, now turned bureaucrat, threw himself heart and soul into his new line of work and took an especially keen interest in the rigorous enforcement of the so-called Chinese exclusion laws. As he wrote to a friend in 1901, this subject had been one of special concern to him for many years. "In 1880, and again in 1892," he observed, "I was at the head of the Knights of Labor when the Chinese exclusion laws were passed, and I made it my business to place every fact obtainable before the workingmen of the United States."²

¹. Harry J. Carman, Henry David, and Paul N. Guthrie, eds. The Path I Trod: The Autobiography of Terence V. Powderly (New York, 1940), pp. 297–299. For brief accounts of Powderly's life, see Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1928–1937), and Gary M. Fink, Milton Cantor, et al., eds., Biographical Dictionary of American Labor Leaders (Westport, 1974). He was born in Carbondale, Pennsylvania, in 1849, left school at the age of thirteen, became a railroad worker, and then a machinist. He joined the Knights of Labor in 1876 and served as its head from 1879 to 1893. In that same period, he was elected mayor of Scranton on the Greenback-Labor ticket in 1878, 1880, and 1882. He turned to law after losing out in the Knights in 1893 and then became commissioner general of immigration in 1897. After leaving that post in 1902, he was out of government service until 1906. He was appointed, however, by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 to be a special representative of the Department of Commerce and Labor and then served from 1907 to 1921 as chief of the Division of Information of the Bureau of Immigration. He died in 1924.

². Terence V. Powderly to H. E. Garman, 16 December 1901, Terence V. Powderly Papers (Catholic University Archives), A1–108. A valuable file of correspondence on Chinese exclusion is contained in these papers. The subject is completely ignored in his Autobiography.
Now at last he was in a position to act on his convictions, and he hastened to do so. As he moved forward, his efforts profoundly affected the course of the Chinese exclusion policy as it was evolving at that time.

This is not the place to trace in detail the laws and treaties with regard to Chinese immigration prior to the time that Powderly moved into the bureau, nevertheless attention needs to be given to some key features. In 1868 the United States had obtained the Burlingame Treaty from China allowing free immigration between the two countries. But in the 1870s so much opposition developed in California, particularly among laboring men who resented the job competition, that the Hayes administration reversed the policy of 1868 and secured a treaty in 1880 from China authorizing the United States to “regulate, limit, or suspend” the entry of Chinese laborers. After the new treaty opened the way, Congress enacted a law in 1882 that suspended the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years. Another law in 1888 was much more restrictive in barring not only laborers but all other Chinese as well, except for “teachers, students, merchants, or travelers for pleasure or curiosity.” In additional legislation of the next few years, the Geary Act of 1892 was noteworthy in requiring Chinese in the United States to register and secure a certificate for use as proof thereafter of their right to be in


the country. Imprisonment and deportation were penalties for those who failed to have a certificate. Since this same law extended all of the earlier legislation for another ten years, the adjusted time period meant that the year 1902, while Powderly was commissioner general, would be a date for renewal or revision.

In reviewing this legislation, one quickly discovers that the trend was heading constantly toward tighter restrictions on the Chinese. To be sure, by the time Powderly came to the front most Chinese immigrants were already being rejected. But even so, the exclusionists were dissatisfied. Bills introduced into Congress in the early 1890s called for the exclusion of all Chinese except officials. To close up the loopholes, argued a writer in Arena in 1900, Congress should "repeal the favored clause—excluding all except diplomats." Powderly was strategically placed to press forward in this direction if he was so inclined—and he was.

Powderly was fated to become involved in another aspect of the Chinese question as a result of the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898 and the annexation thereafter of Guam, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and—as a byproduct—Hawaii. Since large Chinese minorities were present in Hawaii and the Philippines, the commissioner general was bound to be a participant in decision-making regarding the Chinese in those areas.

At this time, it should be noted, organized labor's position on the barring of Chinese was clear-cut. Samuel Gompers, the energetic president of the American Federation of Labor, which was the largest labor organization of the 1890s, "loathed" the Chinese, according to one biographer. This racial antipathy, coupled with a fear by Gompers that Chinese would work for low wages and undermine the labor movement, made him doubly determined to get more anti-Chinese legislation. With the conviction that Chinese could not absorb American traditions and that their continued immigration would overturn western civilization, he was ready to press for extreme measures to keep Chinese out of America.

The AFL approved of and encouraged Gompers in his anti-

Chinese efforts. At its annual convention in 1900, for example, the federation adopted a resolution demanding the reenactment and strengthening of the exclusion laws. In 1901 its executive council authorized Gompers to hire a lobbyist to work for the continuance of the existing law. And in November 1901 an AFL committee at the annual convention ordered Gompers and the executive council to "concentrate all the resources of the organization upon a supreme effort." Other elements of organized labor were less aggressive than the AFL—with the exception of California workingmen—but were ready to follow its lead.

Thus, Powderly could count on an enthusiastic labor constituency for any exclusionist steps that he might take. Other restrictionist groups were active too. The west coast, especially California, was known to be fanatically anti-Chinese. Patriotic organizations were also clamoring for placing limits on all types of immigration.

The anti-Chinese course followed by Powderly was undramatic but effective. One direction he took was to base new restrictive measures on fresh legal interpretations. For example, the attorney general, John W. Griggs of New Jersey, ruled on 15 July 1898,
that a "trader" was not a "merchant" in the sense "merchant" was used in the exclusion laws and treaties. This "opinion" allowed Powderly to reduce substantially the number of Chinese entering the country as merchants.

On 15 June 1900, Powderly obtained an interpretation from the solicitor of the treasury that enabled him to reduce the flow of Chinese students. As the solicitor defined "student," he was:

a person who intends to pursue some of the higher branches of study, or one who seeks to be fitted for some particular profession or occupation for which facilities of study are not afforded in his own country; one for whose support and maintenance in this country, as a student, provision has been made, and who, upon completion of his studies, expects to return to China.

With such a narrow definition as this, only an infinitesimal number of Chinese students could qualify to enter the United States.

In that same month, on 6 June, a new law gave the commissioner general direct control of the exclusion laws—acknowledging what had largely been the case anyway—and the new law specifically authorized the commissioner general to make regulations. New rulings followed so quickly thereafter as to suggest that Powderly had been impatiently waiting for the day when he could move ahead more openly.

His issuance of a long and involved set of new administrative regulations in 1900 represented perhaps the cleverest and most effective step taken by him up to that time. On the surface, these consisted merely of rules and precedents selected from previous laws, court decisions, legal opinions, and decisions made by former officials. Out of the many precedents, however, which contained conflicting pro-Chinese and anti-Chinese rulings, his selections were invariably the harshest. By his careful choice among alternatives, he achieved a policy of exclusion that went beyond anything in effect before. And yet, while revolutionary in scope, his new policy was ingeniously dis-

18. Ibid., p. 31.
19. Ibid., pp. 32-49. The new regulations were part of the *Compilation* that was issued by Powderly on October 1, 1900.
guised as old regulations which had court endorsements.  

Still the relentless Powderly moved ahead. He had curtailed the coming of students and merchants, but the laws yet permitted teachers, officials, travelers, and people in transit to enter. He focused attention next on the transit subject. Convinced that many Chinese who were refused entry crossed over into Mexico and then returned illegally, he introduced regulations on 8 December 1900, requiring Chinese to have a through ticket, to furnish a bond of $500, to present four photographs, and to satisfy the collector of customs of a true intent to travel through the United States for the purpose stated.

To carry out the various parts of his program, Powderly preferred to have legal authorization, but he seemed willing to proceed without it. In requesting, for example, a new law from Congress, he blandly admitted in this instance that he had sometimes approved action outside of the law:

Your attention is called to the fact that the recent arrest of one Sam Wah Kee and six Chinamen, whom he was smuggling into this country, was made by an immigrant inspector, and resulted in the deportation of the six Chinamen and the prosecution of the smuggler, Sam Wah Kee. It is clear that if the said Chinese had knowledge of the lack of said immigrant inspector’s authority to make said arrest they could

20. An example of the wide range of conflicting precedents on matters pertaining to the Chinese is contained in an article by Stephen W. Nickerson, a pro-Chinese lawyer—“in the summer of 1882, Attorney-General Brewster decided (17 Op. Atty. Gen. 416) that Chinese laborers, in transit to or from China or some other country, could not lawfully be transported across the United States. . . about six months later, this same official retracted his first opinion and came (17 Op. A. G., 483) to a contrary decision. In the spring of 1886, Attorney-General Garland decided (18 Op. A. G., 388) that the first opinion was correct. In the summer of 1889, Attorney-General Miller decided (19 Op. A. G., 369) that the second opinion was correct. Here we have four conflicting opinions in the short space of seven years.” Stephen W. Nickerson, “The Dawning of a Wiser Chinese Policy,” North American Review, 188 (December 1908): 919-920.

have successfully resisted it.\(^2\)

In the enforcement of the exclusion regulations, a great deal of responsibility for interpretation devolved upon officials at the various ports, especially at San Francisco where most of the Chinese arrived. In a letter seeking guidance, one official asked whether a returning merchant had to prove that he had performed no manual labor at all. Powderly replied that the man would not lose his status as a merchant by washing his clothes or those of his family. A further comment by the commissioner general, however, was that if the official was in doubt about where to draw the line "you may easily relieve yourself thereof by rejecting the applicant in any such case, leaving him to his own recourse by appeal to the Department."\(^3\)

Such a policy would mean expense and delay for the merchant. In addition, the tendency in Washington was to uphold the rulings of the port officials. Thus, Powderly had developed another device for barring or deporting.

Among enforcement officials, James R. Dunn at San Francisco was Powderly's favorite, and under this Chinese inspector and his superiors the port acquired a reputation for draconian measures. The Reverend Ira Condit, who worked with Chinese in that city, described the procedures there in unflattering terms:

> When they do arrive, merchants, laborers, are all alike penned up, like a flock of sheep, in a wharfshed, for many days, and often weeks, at their own expense, and are denied all communication with their own people, while the investigation of their cases moves its slow length along. The right of bail is denied. A man is imprisoned as a criminal who had committed no crime.\(^4\)

Although the description was by a partisan observer, it pointed up the role played by delay, expense, incarceration, and annoying investigations in discouraging Chinese from seeking entry.

Shortly after Dunn took the San Francisco position, he became

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4. Ira M. Condit, \textit{The Chinaman As We See Him and Fifty Years of Work for Him} (New York, 1900), p. 87.
a center of controversy when Ho Mun died in the County Jail on 21 November 1899, after becoming ill in the detention shed. Convinced that Dunn had denied him medical attention, the Chinese community obtained a lawyer who brought charges against Dunn, denouncing him especially for being arrogant and insulting toward Chinese arrivals. Rallying to his defense, however, his fellow officials insisted that the man who had died was trying to enter under false pretenses and that the relatives bringing charges were not really his relatives. Rushing to Dunn’s defense also was the Building Trades Council of San Francisco, which claimed a membership of 8500. Its resolutions, directed at the president, both houses of Congress, the secretary of state, and the secretary of the treasury, declared the council’s “unqualified support to such officials as J. R. Dunn, Esq.”

Holding him to be a victim of the mercantile and transportation interests, the council emphatically endorsed the procedures of the Chinese bureau. Thus, Dunn became and remained a hero of labor and the anti-Chinese elements in California in ensuing years, and the Treasury Department, where the Bureau of Immigration was lodged at that time, quickly cleared him of all charges.

Not only did Powderly approve of Dunn’s rigorous enforcement of the regulations, he also welcomed Dunn’s recommendations for sterner measures and frequently adopted them as bureau policy. It was Dunn’s promptings, for example, that led to the policy described earlier toward Chinese in transit. Powderly had been inspired to develop his more severe regulations of 1900 upon learning from Dunn that the official had begun to check up carefully on these en route people and inspect their baggage; and he had succeeded, in the latter part of 1901, in finding reasons to reject 200 out of 1000 of them.

By way of contrast, of 37,000 Chinese passing through the United States on their way to another country prior to 1901, not one had been known to be turned back. In Dunn’s era, according to Professor Mary Coolidge, “Treasury regulations culminated in a sort

25. Resolution of Building Trades Council of the City and Council of San Francisco, Feb. 15, 1900, in SCR, FB 12. For all of the correspondence, see Packet No. 1094. Although the sworn statements are strong evidence in support of Dunn, the callous attitude known to prevail in San Francisco at that time, and the extent of uproar among the Chinese—who were ordinarily uncomplaining—suggest that Dunn was guilty.

of reign of terror." Dunn was known to be hard of hearing anyway, and his investigation of a Chinese immigrant through an interpreter—who was sometimes unacquainted with certain Chinese dialects—must have been a fascinating spectacle to witness.

To Powderly, Dunn and his cohorts were ideal public servants. "Attention is specially called," wrote Powderly to the Secretary of the Treasury in his 1901 Annual Report, "to the report from San Francisco." The official in charge there (Dunn's superior) was "energetic, intelligent, and capable." Moreover, "nearly two-thirds of the applications were found to be fraudulent, and the applicants were denied admission." In this year of administering the exclusion acts, Powderly could point to other fruits of his tighter policies. Of 2702 who had claimed membership in the approved classes, the Bureau had rejected 918. In addition, 328 had been deported who were illegally in the country. In sum the standard for efficiency and outstanding accomplishment by the bureau had become, under the commissioner general, a kind of body count of how many Chinese were barred or deported.

But the bureau head was still not fully satisfied. In enforcing the laws, he reported, he had found many obstacles in the way. He expounded, in his Annual Report of 1901, on the means taken to evade the laws. Minor sons, he thought, were often not true sons. Returning laborers were not the same people who had acquired certificates at an earlier time. Stricter rules were needed to prevent illegal entry across the land borders. And the term "merchant" needed to be defined even more narrowly.

Powderly's anti-Chinese campaign was viewed with alarm and growing anger by the Chinese minister, Wu T'ing-fang, who quickly learned that diplomatic notes of protest were useless but kept sending them anyway. At last, resorting to desperate measures, Minister Wu sought out Powderly at his home in Washington on the rainy night of 13 July 1901 and offered a trade. If Powderly would work for legislation that would treat all nationalities alike, or at least allow upper-class Chinese to come to the United States, the diplomat would cooperate in keeping out undesirable elements. But the wary Powderly, who took the precaution of stationing two of his friends in the next room in their stocking feet to listen to the exchanges, refused

27. Ibid., p. 320.
28. Annual Report... Immigration, 1901, p. 49.
to bargain and referred him to Gompers. Powderly in general showed no concern over the possible adverse reactions of China, and he was out of office by the time the bitter fruits of such activities as his culminated in the Chinese boycott of 1905.

The commissioner general had his own ideas about new legislation and began to intimate this in 1901. In his Annual Report in June, he stressed the early expiration date of the exclusion laws, 5 May 1902. In guarded language, the treasurer’s Report relayed the wishes of the Immigration Bureau. “If the laws should be renewed, or their provisions extended,” wrote Secretary Lyman Gage, “the department would be pleased to furnish a statement covering certain administrative betterments suggested by experience in their enforcement.”

The issue of new legislation in 1902 was a vital matter to Powderly. All of his efforts of the preceding four years might count for nothing if the past laws were not reenacted. And a powerful pro-China lobby, including business interests, transportation interests, California agricultural interests, missionary interests, Chinese-Americans, and Chinese diplomats, was determined to modify if not eliminate the anti-Chinese laws. A bitter struggle went on in the late months of 1901 and the early part of 1902 between anti-Chinese and pro-Chinese forces in their endeavors to get Congress and the president to support their side.

On this issue, the position taken by President Theodore Roosevelt was in favor of continuing the existing statutes, and he so indicated in his recommendations to Congress on 3 December 1901. But while calling for renewal, he did mention the possibility of strengthening the laws “wherever necessary in order to make . . . enforcement entirely effective.” Supporting the president’s stand for maintaining the status quo, Powderly had an article in Collier’s Weekly on 14

29. “Memo” by Robert Watchorn in Watchorn to Powderly, 25 March 1902, Powderly Papers, A1-112. An example of Wu’s diplomatic notes of protest, this one on the student issue, is in Wu T’ing-fang to John Hay, 30 November 1900, NA, RG 59, Notes from the Chinese Legation.
32. U.S., Congress, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (New York, 1897-1901), 14: 6650. For the pleased reaction of a California member of the House of Representatives, see the New York Daily Tribune, 21 November 1901, p. 3.
December affirming that the laws "should be re-enacted."  

But Powderly was more ambitious. While he joined with the president publicly in endorsing existing laws, on 6 December he sent Roosevelt a draft of a lengthy, complicated, and much harsher bill, prepared, he explained, "here in the Bureau under my directions."  

On the same day, Representative Julius Kahn of California presented Powderly's draft to the House as his own bill. Another somewhat different explanation of the authorship of the bill, offered by Gompers to Pennsylvania's Senator Boies Penrose, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Immigration, was that it was "framed by representatives of the American Federation of Labor and by members of the California Exclusion Commission, and as to the administrative features, acceptable to the Bureau of Immigration."  

The two versions were not necessarily contradictory. One suspects that Powderly, Gompers, and other exclusionists put their heads together and developed the main provisions of the bill. Nevertheless, the pervasive influence of Powderly is to be seen in the fact that the bill contained many of the points he had been advocating in his annual reports as commissioner general. 

The contents of the Kahn bill—the most extreme of seventeen anti-Chinese bills proposed—contained a listing of the new rulings and regulations that had come about under Powderly. Therefore, if the bill passed, even Chinese members of the privileged classes—students, merchants, teachers, and Chinese passing through into another country—would have difficulty getting into the United States or its possessions. In addition, the bill endeavored to bar Chinese minorities in Hawaii and the Philippines from the United States mainland and from migrating from one colonial possession to another. 

At the Senate hearings on the bill, one critic charged that it was inconsistent, unconstitutional, in violation of treaties, burdensome to shipping interests, and likely to provoke innumerable court cases.  

But Powderly stoutly defended the bill's provisions as essential

34. Powderly to George Cortelyou, 6 December 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers (Library of Congress).
and maintained that all of the regulations devised by him earlier were required to prevent Chinese from circumventing the laws. To dramatize his side of the argument, he showed up at the hearings one day with two persons whom he identified as Chinese falsely claiming to be merchants.37

Before the final version was enacted, Powderly had been removed from office by the president on the grounds—deemed later by Roosevelt to be incorrect—that he had been exerting "political pressure on the commissioner of immigration in New York."38 But this development did not greatly alter the situation. A kindred spirit and fellow labor leader, Frank P. Sargent, Grand Master of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, took his place. And while the end product was not the original Kahn bill or anything like it in wording, an analysis of the final version reveals that Powderly had scored a near total legislative victory. Only a few short paragraphs in length, the new law extended the existing laws, including certain crucial sections of the 1888 act. In addition, the restrictions were to apply to the island territories; Chinese were not allowed to migrate from one set of islands to another, nor to the mainland. Furthermore, the secretary of the treasury—which in practice would mean the commissioner general—took his place. And while the end product was not the original Kahn bill or anything like it in wording, an analysis of the final version reveals that Powderly had scored a near total legislative victory. Only a few short paragraphs in length, the new law extended the existing laws, including certain crucial sections of the 1888 act. In addition, the restrictions were to apply to the island territories; Chinese were not allowed to migrate from one set of islands to another, nor to the mainland. Furthermore, the secretary of the treasury—which in practice would mean the commissioner general—was authorized to make rules to implement the act.39 Although the exclusionists were unable to block a provision specifying that the regulations should be in conformity with treaty obligations, this part did not matter a great deal, because the courts had upheld most of the Powderly prescriptions already.

The new law of 29 April 1902 was in essence an endorsement of a Powderly stage in the Chinese exclusion policy, a stage consisting of limitations and humiliating methods that went beyond anything developed before his time. Even before he took office in 1897 the number of Chinese arrivals, including returning Chinese-American travelers, was a modest 3363.40 By 1900 the figure had been reduced to 1247—less than half what it had been before. After the new law of 1902 the remaining trickle of Chinese who could enter the country had to demonstrate that they were students or merchants planning to reside temporarily in the United States; or else, they had to be officials, Chinese passing through en route to other countries,

37. Ibid., p. 69.
40. Annual Report . . . Immigration, 1900, p. 34.
travelers, or returning legal residents. Even most of these had to be willing to undergo a demeaning system of checking and processing. Moreover, the policy, and the way it was being enforced, seemed also designed to reduce steadily and eventually eliminate altogether the tiny Chinese-American minority already residing in the United States. Consisting mainly of male Chinese, the figure stood at approximately 90,000 in 1900. Presumably, these people would grow old and die without leaving offspring—or would return to China to have their families. Meanwhile as the flow of incoming Chinese was being cut off, the number of immigrants from European countries was mounting rapidly toward the one-million-a-year mark attained in 1905.

The law of 1902 appeared to be a capstone for a policy that had become openly racist in both philosophy and administration—as contrasted with the earlier program of barring Chinese laborers for economic reasons. That is, the prohibiting of Chinese as Orientals had superseded the shutting out of a particular class of Chinese. With respect to the racist assumptions, Powderly showed little hesitation in conceding them. In an article by him in 1901, for example, he wrote that he opposed Chinese immigrants on grounds of race, as well as religion and economic position.\(^4\) He did not stress the racist element, however.

Powderly's racist stance, such as it was, is not surprising since racist myths were respectable and widely believed in his day. But it does emerge as a contrast with the enlightened racial position of the Knights of Labor in 1878, when its constitution opened up membership to persons of all races.\(^2\) And his attitudes and actions also suggest some qualifications to the presumed idealism of Powderly, since the bureau's treatment of Chinese in his term of office was not only restrictive but notably inhumane.

Notwithstanding, one should recognize that the Immigration Bureau pacesetter believed sincerely in what he was doing. He could be described as resolute and incorruptible. In light of the fact that the smuggling of persons was common at that time, and that the laws were not easy to enforce, he showed himself an able administrator and displayed a great deal of imagination in developing

\(^4\) Powderly, "Exclude Anarchist and Chinaman!" in Powderly Papers, Scrapbook, 1900-04.

techniques for achieving his exclusionist goals. Among these techniques, the most notable were his use of administrative rulings, self-serving definitions of terms, legal interpretations, and the encouragement of like-minded anti-Chinese subordinates.

Powderly’s accomplishments in the area of limiting Chinese immigrants demonstrate that his importance did not end with his departure from the Knights of Labor in 1893. A study of his record from 1897 to 1902 also reveals that he was still very much in step with the labor movement of that date. Indeed, he was continuing to perform valuable services for his constituency. There is even some substance to the charges in his day that he had turned the Bureau of Immigration into a branch office of organized labor.

Although the exclusion movement was broadly based and by no means a one-man show, he certainly did a great deal to expedite it. He especially did much to institutionalize on the federal level the racist postures of California. In California in the 1870s, Dennis Kearney led a workingman’s movement against Chinese using the slogan, “The Chinese must go!” As Commissioner General of Immigration at the turn of the century, Powderly’s official actions matched the rhetoric of Dennis Kearney.