

CAPITOL OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 305
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
TEL (916) 651-4029
FAX (916) 324-0922

DISTRICT OFFICE
20888 AMAR RD., SUITE 205
WALNUT, CA 91789
TEL (909) 598-3981
FAX (909) 598-6459

WEB
WWW.SENATE.CA.GOV/HUFF

COMMITTEES
EDUCATION

California State Senate

SENATOR
BOB HUFF

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER
TWENTY-NINTH SENATE DISTRICT



Time for an Apology, Bob Beckel

by Senator Bob Huff

Bob Beckel, of Fox News, messed with the wrong folks when he recently, on the air, referred to Chinese as “Chinamen” and spewed a bunch of negative comments related to Chinese. Here’s what he said:

“...Chinese are the single biggest threat to the national security of the U.S. ...Do you know what we just did? As usual, we bring them over here and teach a bunch of Chinamen – err -- Chinese people -- how to do computers and they go back to China and hack into us... There are billions of them. And, and all they do is to hack into our stuff. They send these cheap toys, all of which got lead in it and kill kids.”

Understandably, there have been strident responses from the Chinese-American community calling for actions from apology to resignation.

Just to be clear, Beckel is a life-long democrat operative, though his show is a regular on the more right leaning Fox News channel. But ethnic slams know no partisan boundary, and Beckel was wrong on multiple levels.

The term Chinaman (or the plural Chinamen) itself began as a neutral term to describe someone from China. It was descriptive, not negative, much as we used to say Irishman or Englishman. Since the 60’s, our society has for the most part adopted a more respectful way of describing people who are not like us. It is possible that Beckel reverted to the language of his youth, before he caught and corrected himself in mid-sentence. The fact that he has not apologized since then, however, speaks volumes, as he knows better.

What is more troublesome to me is Beckel’s simplistic and generalized Chinese bashing. While the behavior he accuses “Chinamen” of engaging in has been reported to happen, that is not all that the Chinese do, and they certainly export to us more than just toys with lead. Much of our manufacturing has bolted to China, resulting in most of our computers, solar panels, and high-tech devices now being made or assembled in China.

While we can't figure out where to build it or how to pay for it here in California, China has built more high-speed rail than the rest of the world combined in just the last 10 years. And they have been transforming their society from rural to urban at an unprecedented pace. Their top-universities are churning out top-flight engineers and scientists as well.

But Beckel has zero differentiation between the Chinese who live in China, the Chinese Government, or the Chinese who have left their country to pursue their dreams here in America. Take a look at our top schools in our state from Kindergarten to graduate schools, and almost without exception, you'll see Chinese leading the pack and raising the academic standards of their respective schools. And if they are here on a student visa, why do we force them to return when they finish? Beckel thinks they just go "home" to hack into our computers, which is nonsense, but we should reform our immigration policy to give them permanent legal status when they possess education or skills in areas in which we have needs.

On the heels of ABC's Jimmy Kimmel program last year where Kimmel and the network left uncut a child's statement we should kill all the Chinese to erase our nation's debt to them, and SCA 5, the California Constitutional Amendment that would allow racial discrimination to determine college admittance, Chinese-Americans are now paying more attention to the media and politics, which is a healthy response.

Was Beckel's tirade offensive? Absolutely. Should Beckel and Fox News apologize? Absolutely. Should Beckel resign? That is up to Fox News. But going forward, news media and politicians take note: Chinese-Americans may not have been paying much attention or had much of a voice in the past, but that was then; this is now.

Bob Huff serves as the Republican Leader in the California State Senate and represents the 29th Senate District covering portions of Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino Counties. Follow Senator Huff on Twitter @bobhuff99.