

FACTORS BEHIND CITIZENSHIP RENUNCIATION

JAOL Concern in This Matter

Bald announcements that over six thousand American citizens of Japanese ancestry have applied for renunciation of their citizenship naturally disturbed the American public. (seven thousand to date)

To all American citizens of Japanese ancestry this matter is of especial concern because it detracts from the efforts of so many who are proving their loyalty on the combat fronts, before the bar of public opinion, and on the production fronts at home. As an organization composed of loyal Americans of Japanese ancestry, the background for this disturbing situation, we feel, should be made known to Mr. John Burling, Special Executive Assistant of the Department of Justice who has indicated his interest in this situation.

This report to him is a partial and incomplete attempt to delve into the background causes of those who are repudiating their American citizenship.

Through information gained in conversations with those who are aware of conditions in Tule Lake, as well as those who have relatives there, the following factors may be considered as causative.

1. Segregation Center Community Pressure. The Tule Lake Segregation Center is a community composed of persons activated by a common desire to be sent to Japan. This has come to be regarded as the nearest surest "port to Japan." Naturally as the predominant sentiment is Japanese in tone, community pressure by Issei and Kibei, particularly, has been exerted in the direction of discouraging everything identified as American. Minor children, as well as those who wanted to remain and keep the family circle intact have been subject to this pressure, which was actually the threat of physical violence against those who manifested traits or tendencies which could be interpreted as American.

This segregation of repatriates and expatriates could not result in any but attitudes which can be construed as

opposed to American ideals. The more vociferous elements gain control and bull-dozed the community into complete acceptance of Japanese ways.

Reports have been heard that a form of ~~hak~~ blackmail has been perpetrated upon those who attempted to leave Tule Lake Segregation Center. Such relocatees have been termed "American spies" and inimical to the interests of the camp. Indicative of ineffectual policing and the lack of peace and order is that perpetrators of violence have not been apprehended. Pressure groups had thus been given tacit encouragement to rule the camp.

2. Acceptance of Axis Propaganda.  
The recent spectacle of evacuation and relocation center living have given greater credence to Radio-Tokyo propaganda that this is a race war. The long history of anti-Japanese persecution on the west coast gives additional weight to this Axis line.

Since a reported 85 per cent are fluent in the Japanese language and less proficient in English, they have been susceptible to Japan influences, short wave Japanese broadcasts, and to Tokyo claims as carried in the Japanese newspapers. The tempering influence of American newspapers, magazines, radio, and organizations is absent. Those which do circulate are dismissed as American propaganda.

It is regrettable that attempts to Americanize and promote the merits of democracy have not been disseminated to counteract the distinctly foreign and artificial atmosphere, promoted by Kibei and some Issei imbued with the nationalism and militarism of the last eight years of Japan.

3. Chance to Avoid Combat Service.  
It is generally acknowledged that among the more vocal and militant are Kibei who left Japan to avoid military service. Now, faced with the draft in this country, many of these Kibei are taking this means to avoid combat service. With few exceptions, Japanese Americans inducted into our armed forces are being sent to the combat fronts. Naturally the opportunity to sidestep combatant risks is utilized by many.

Many of these Kibei were originally sent to Japan by their parents and supported by family remittances. These

American dollars when converted to Japanese yen permitted almost luxurious living. Consequently, many Kibei had become irresponsible drifters and playboys. Any change to avoid battle is being seized upon.

4. Insecurity. The paucity of financial aid to those who would relocate has given rise to a sense of insecurity about going outside, especially those who are not too sure of their being able to earn a living due to language and custom handicaps. Return to Japan is an easy alternative when faced with the necessity of immediate decision for either relocation or military service. At least, they feel they would be among their own people in Japan.

There are those who have become so distraught by the series of forced vacate orders issued by the government that they prefer to remain in Tule Lake rather than repeat the processes of being moved again so they accept their segregated status matter-of-factly.

There are those whose pride dissuades them from accepting any form of assistance which would be seen as charity. They prefer to remain in Tule Lake and even renounce American citizenship. It has been reported that some Kibei are utilizing this renunciation of citizenship as a means to cancel debts incurred among their own friends. They are seizing upon this means as a sort of tacit bankruptcy.

5. Lack of Responsible Leadership. At the outset of war responsible leaders were seized by government agencies and detained. Men who through years of service in the community were respected and whose advice was considered sound are still interned. The benefit of their leadership has been markedly absent in Tule Lake. The counsel and presence of men who were formerly leaders would have done much to discourage Nisei from renouncing their citizenship.

6. Lack of Confidence. Kibei who have been living in an alien environment most of their lives have naturally little confidence in their ability to make a livelihood in America. Their acceptance by the Japanese government for passage to Japan would only be possible by their renunciation of American citizenship. Many have seized upon this change.

Contact with U.S. government officials in the recent past who have displayed a condescending manner or who have been antagonistic in their questioning have crystallized a feeling that their place is not in this country.

7. Changing Sentiment. Recent reports indicate that there have been many Tule Lake residents who have written to friends asking about relocation possibilities on the outside. This includes also Nisei and Kibei who have renounced their American citizenship.

The uncertainty of life in Japan, plus a disgust of camp life because of the intemperate acts of nationalistic Kibei, account for this change in sentiment and the desire to leave Tule Lake.

#### CONCLUSION

The foregoing does not attempt to be an expert diagnosis of conditions in Tule Lake nor is it a complete recital of causes behind the renunciation of American citizenship.

Consider the wide divergences in the situation of Japanese Americans today: On the one hand, the magnificent performance of Japanese American soldiers, exemplified in the confidence in American democracy.

On the other hand, the exhibit of a Tule Lake Segregation Center and the wholesale renunciation of American citizenship therein might well be indicative of the extreme to which race bigotry has driven a confused and harassed segment of the population.

Characterizing them as people of little faith cannot obscure the slights and injustices which have compelled them to this stand. Those who are charged with the administration of this minority can do much to restore hope in the ultimate processes of American fairplay.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Grant Masaoka  
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

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