

FROM COLLECTION OF  
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HEART MOUNTAIN RELOCATION CENTER  
Community Analysis Section

(1)

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REGISTRATION AT HEART MOUNTAIN

When the army announcement was released through the Sentinel, the center newspaper, the residents accepted it as a matter of fact. Perhaps many felt that it was just a newspaper story, although the editorial emphasized the importance of the announcement on the Nisei.

To state that no reaction was evident during the period may be a misnomer. Those who understood the seriousness of the announcement did express their viewpoints. On February 5th, one week later, an informal poll was conducted and teletyped to John C. Baker, Chief of Reports Office, Washington, D. C. It was stated in the report that "a few words upon the integrity of the Japanese in America by the President or some other high-ranking official would help considerably." A clearcut elucidation is still lacking on Nisei status" and that "most question the feasibility of an all Nisei combat unit".<sup>1</sup>

It was not until February 6th when the Sentinel headlined "Army, WRA Registration Starts" did the residents who a concerted reaction. The Sentinel also announced that a recruiting team led by Lieut. Ray McDaniels had arrived to confer with the Project Director, the Block Chairmen, and the Managers. To further explain the program, the Lieutenant also conducted two or three of the proposed series of meetings at the Block.

1 See addendum.

Meanwhile many small and informal groups gathered and openly discussed the program. Many claimed that our rights as American citizens should be clarified before registration. There were those who thought that the registration should be carried out as announced and questions should be answered according to individual's discretion.

Before going into the actual discussion of the meeting, perhaps a few words on the makeup of the body and the general mood would help. There were a few individuals who had already made up their minds to volunteer. (See Attached). The group was not entirely composed of individuals who were thinking of terms of future America. There was a very strong minority of those who had no confidence or faith in future America. Then there were those who were all-out for America, but who wanted clarification of citizenship status before registering. This group composed a decided majority. To many, the sacrifices made and injustices felt because of the evacuation were still fresh in their minds. Very little had been done to soothe their feelings. Long before registration was to start, a planned program should have been followed including favorable propaganda via newspaper and radio (unlike Denver Post's article on Amache camp), wider and more definite relocation policy (not merely domestic jobs and such), and opening up of defense jobs to the evacuees. This would have helped to prepare the evacuees psychologically for the actual registration and they would have been less susceptible to the arguments of the adverse group.

Perhaps this will explain why the meeting was so difficult to conduct. Most of them opposed a combat unit composed of Nisei, and others were dubious as to what Question No. 27 implied. But many, it was an opportunity to present past grievances.

These small gatherings climaxed in one mass meeting held Wednesday, February 10th at one of the Blocks. At this meeting it was voted that each of the 20 blocks send 5 representatives to form a "congress" so that a definite stand could be made to the Administration and Washington.

The "congress" first met Thursday, February 11th. A roll call showed that every block was represented. A temporary chairman and a secretary were elected. Discussion on what proper steps should be taken was opened.

After a prolonged discussion on what the issue was, the body adopted a wire to be sent to other relocation centers so that a unified stand could be taken and presented to the proper authorities. This wire was immediately dispatched to other centers.<sup>2</sup> The tempo of the first meeting was that clarification of status was all important. A list of resolutions, numbering 14,<sup>3</sup> was proposed, and condensed into 4 major resolutions which were:

1. Clarification of citizenship status
  - A. Clarification of the objectives of the present and the post-war problems as they concern the Japanese.
  - B. Immediate clarification of Civil Service and war defense industries status
  - C. Guarantee all branches of armed service open to Nisei.

2 and 3 See Addendum.

were not delegated the power to vote on any issue.

One individual who claimed that he represented the Kibel group addressed the body upon the importance of close harmony and cooperation between the Nisei and the Kibel. He also stressed that one should beware of the under-current movement which has been disbanding many organizations. One can derive one's own conclusion as to what this individual was driving at.

The question again arose as to what was the main issue -- the issue which had caused so much discussion and the formation of the "congress". Was it the clarification of status, or was it question 27? A prolonged debate ensued. As a result, it was suggested that registration be completed with a qualified answer for question 27. That night another block meeting was called and a report was made of what had occurred at the "congress" during the course of the day.

The block meeting at which the writer was present was relatively quiet and smoothly conducted. It was recommended that all register, and that it was the individual's sacred right to decide whether or not to volunteer. Those who did not wish to volunteer until citizenship status was clarified, or until drafted, or for some other reason, were to so qualify their answers to question 27. Those who wish to expatriate or repatriate were to do so. In short, the individual was to act according to his conviction and discretion.

It was in the meeting the following day that the question "why should we register" was presented by a few individuals who claimed that their blocks did not sanction registration

At the same time, discussion arose again on the implication of Question No. 27. Many did not know what the question implied. Some thought that an unqualified "Yes" would automatically make them volunteers. Others felt that if this were the implication, a unified answer -- "Yes" or "No" with qualification -- would bring to the attention of the administration the need for clarification of status. Seeing that an authoritative interpretation regarding this question was necessary, an individual was sent to confer the question with McDaniels.

According to McDaniels, Question No. 27 would have been answered in many ways. If the individual did not wish to volunteer at the present time, he could answer "Yes", with qualification. And he stated that "the only time one volunteers is with an unqualified 'Yes'". He further stated that if the registrant answered "No" to that particular question, "the Army or the War Department would not see the questionnaire and they would have no contact with individuals" and that "he will be the same as any others here seeking outside employment".<sup>4</sup>

However, in the Sentinel supplement, series 32, dated February 18th, Project Director Robertson issued a statement on registration in which he declared "When question No. 27 is answered 'Yes' it does not mean you are volunteering for army duty. To volunteer for army duty you must fill out Form 265". Question 27 and 28, according to Robertson, were loyalty questions. Such conflicting interpretations by two officials only

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added further confusion.

<sup>4</sup> See Addendum 4.

As a result of the final "congress" meeting held Saturday, February 13th, a resolution was adopted requesting the Administration to postpone registration until all matters, particularly citizenship status, had been clarified. Two letters which were previously read to the body were to be incorporated and submitted to the Administration to show the need for postponement.<sup>6&7</sup> The chairman then asked for a vote of confidence and asked individual representatives for their support.

Most of the representatives did not possess the authority to act upon the issue "not to register". They were delegated only certain powers, mainly to report back to the block.

Alternatives if the Administration did not grant postponement were discussed. It was decided to answer Question 27 with similar qualifications by all individuals.

A committee was appointed to forward this resolution and to confer with the Project Director. The Project Director then stated that "Any wilful interference, threat, intimidation, or false rumor is a violation of the Espionage and Sedition laws of the United States and carried the penalty of a \$10,000 fine or imprisonment for not more than 20 years, or both. It is the duty of every citizen to report such violation."<sup>8</sup> He advised the representatives that registration be conducted as scheduled and that when registration had been completed, he would support any movement for clarification of status.

As a result of the statement, the "congress" disbanded, recommending the residents to register and held the Army and the

WRA to expedite the program.

When registration was completed, it was learned that only 37 had volunteered. In comparison with the Relocation Center at Minnidoka where approximately 300 volunteered, the result was very discouraging. It is the writer's opinion that this dismal showing was due to various factors.

Reviewing the account of the whole registration program we find many inconsistencies in statement and policy on the part of the officials conducting the program.

Pertaining to Question No. 27, McDaniels stated that the only time one volunteers is with unqualified "Yes". Robertson issued the statement that "When Question No. 27 is answered "Yes", it does not mean you are volunteering for army duty." McDaniels stated that an unqualified "No" would not have any effect on the individual by the Army or War Department. Robertson stated that it was a loyalty question and that if the question is answered "No" it would indicate disloyalty unless qualified by good and sufficient personal reasons".

To further illustrate that confusion was evident, some of the qualified answers were: "Yes" or "No", if or until citizenship status was clarified.

The writer feels that the confusion on this question could have been eliminated if those persons who drew up the questionnaire realized the predicament the residents were in. The question should have had two parts: 1) as stated; 2) will you volunteer.

Perhaps more would have volunteered if they were permitted

to enlist in any branch of the armed force. Many were wary that an all Nisei combat unit would be a recurrence of the rumored Negro battalion of the last war.

In other questions, too, it was evident that those who drew up the questionnaire did not understand the background and nature of the residents. In the alien registration, Question No. 28 was stated thus: "Will you swear an unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?" The problem arises that if the aliens "forsovere allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor they will be man without a country. This is so, if one realizes that they are not eligible to become naturalized. However this particular question was reworded with the permission of the WPA, Washington.

In the similar question for the citizen, some were dubious as to what an "unqualified allegiance" meant. Did it mean allegiance to America, right or wrong? In which case this particular individual would have said no. Or did it mean allegiance over preference to other country? In which case he would have said yes. Each of the questions of the registration was considered and weighed for technicality and implication. This could have been avoided had the questions been properly worded and explained.

A proper approach by the officials conducting the registration would have alleviated much of the misunderstandings and, also, would have done much to create a receptive and cooperative mood

among the residents. Instead of arguing and spending time on such questions as 27 and the Niseis combat unit, perhaps more emphasis should have been placed upon matters more fundamental as a position of Japanese in the future America. The residents should have been impressed more on the importance their present stand will bear upon them in the post war period.

For instance, in Minidoka Relocation Center, we learn that officials contacted all prominent leaders, Issei and Nisei, who were accepted and trusted by the residents. Approximately a week was spent in discussion and conference concerning the importance of this matter. When the registration actually began, it was an accepted fact.

There is no need to elaborate on the attitude of the residents as a result of the evacuation. As stated in the informal public opinion poll "if the announcement were made prior to contemplation of evacuation majority of the evacuees believed that an exceptionally high volunteer percentage would have resulted with an equally high percentage of approval from their parents".<sup>9</sup> The high numbers of those volunteered in Hawaii under such condition can be cited as an example.

The peculiar complexity of this particular center had a direct bearing on the volunteer. The population is composed of evacuees from the Los Angeles area and from the Northern California, namely San Francisco and Santa Clara Valley and a few from the northwest Pacific States.

The Japanese American Citizens League which was the only patri-

9 See Addendum 1.

otic and political organization to represent the Nisei in the west, was condemned by the southern element because of the past record in their particular locale. In northern California and in the northwestern states, the record of the JACL had been good. In Minidoka, composed mainly of the northwestern element, we find that this particular organization had a very strong influence and prestige.

Some Nisei claim that because the community council of this center was composed mainly of Issei, and not Nisei as in all other centers, registration failed. If the Nisei are lamenting of this fact, it is due to their own fault. Most of the Nisei are yet to become civic-minded and think in terms of the community. Hardly any of them willingly attend the block meetings and, again, we find that in all other relocation center the community council is composed of Nisei but we find some of the other camps also experienced similar disappointment in registration.

It is true that the community council did not take any definite stand claiming that it was an individual right as far as volunteering was concerned: However, they felt that it was their duty to preserve peace and harmony within the camp -- so its policy was that of "Peace at any price."

Despite the poor showing the writer sincerely believes that the Nisei's loyalty to America should not be judged and yardstick-ed by the number of volunteers.

ADDENDUM 1

TELETYPE

TO: John C. Baker  
Chief, Office Reports  
Barr Building  
Washington, D.C.

DATE: February 6, 1943

SENT BY: Vaughn Mechau

TIME SENT:

Approximately 200 Americans of Japanese ancestry have shown intention to volunteer according to an informal poll before arrival of recruiting officers. As soon as induction starts the figure will undoubtedly increase.

Reactions of the evacuees regarding recent army announcement are diverse. A few public words upon the integrity of the Japanese in America, especially the Nisei, by the president or some other high and respected official will help considerably. A clear elucidation is still lacking on the Nisei status. Lack of confidence in them seems to exist. Some received reclassification to 4C from their draft boards only yesterday. Even the count of the board indicated question as to their loyalty. This policy is inconsistent and demoralizing.

All volunteers should be considered loyal to the country.

Most of them question the feasibility of an all-Nisei combat unit, claiming they prefer fighting with other bloods and feel that postwar assimilation can be furthered in this way. However a few feel that by such a unit they can prove their worth as a group.

Many enlistees visiting the project relate some discrimination toward them even in the armed forces.

Many feel that all branches of the armed forces should be open to them. Others want to know what guarantee the Government can give them and their parents during the post war era regarding protection from anti-Japanese legislation particularly as proposed in California.

Kibel and Issel are wondering into what kind of scheme they are to be fitted. They feel too much emphasis is placed upon Nisei. Understand that numerous Kibels were discharged from army.

Majority of parents now apathetic or at least passive to the announcement. Changed attitude is direct and natural result of the evacuation. If the announcement were made prior to contemplation of evacuation majority of the evacuees believe that an exceptional high percentage of volunteers would have resulted with an equally high percentage of approval from their parents.

Farsighted evacuees favor enlistment because they are concerned about post war era.

Guy Robertson  
Project Director

ADDE<sup>N</sup>DUM 2

## The Wire Transmitted to the Nine other Relocation Centers

"We desire unification of all relocation centers in one congress. Purpose to discuss and formulate plans concerning combat unit and other related problems in the future. Stand on Constitutional grounds of citizenship clarification, civil service, etc. Desire participation in all armed forces, abolishment of all segregated combat units, etc. Desire registration postponed until above status clarified. Letter follow in detail. Will you collaborate?"

Note: Before this wire was sent, it was condensed.

ADDENDUM 3

RESOLUTIONS PROPOSED BY THE CONGRESS

1. Clarification of citizenship status. (all other resolutions dependent on this point)
2. Postponement of registration until status clarified.
3. Unification of action among 10 relocation centers.
4. Publicizing the clarification of our status;
  - a. Thru Presidential proclamation
  - b. Thru proclamations by Stimson or Biddle.
5. Clarification of objectives of present and post-war problems for us and our parents.
6. Immediate release of all internees not proven guilty.
7. Immediate clarification of civil service and war defense (status of Nisei) industries.
8. Curtailing unfavorable propoganda. (some means must be provided)
9. Guarantee of all branches of services to Nisei.
10. Citizens desire to know minimum physical requirements of the army regulations. Should know because in event we don't volunteer and are inducted, Nisei must be protected from unlawful induction.
11. Abolishment of Nisei combat unit.
12. Publication of letter of the President by photostatic copies.
13. Restitution of losses caused or incurred because of evacuation.
14. Request for constitutional amendment for naturalization of our parents.

ADDENDUM 4

Conversation between Fred Miyasato and Lieut. McDaniels.

FRED MIYASATO: Lieutenant McDaniels, will you please explain clearly and definitely what the registration represents and also explain Question No. 27 of the registration?

LIEUTENANT MCDANIELS: The Form 304A is the WRA registration form which the WRA wishes all citizens over 17 years of age to fill out, regardless of sex.

This form when completed is sent to Washington to the headquarters of the WRA where at that time it is cleared through the FBI and Military Intelligence. The object of this form is so that everyone at the relocation center will be cleared, and they will be granted permission or denied indefinite leave. When this information is returned from Washington, Mr. Robertson at any time can send one out on a job without having to wait several days or weeks to clear in Washington.

Question No. 27 can be answered in many ways. The great majority of the people in this center are either over military age, 17 to 37 inclusive, who unconditionally want to join the Army now can answer the question No. 27 with the unqualified yes if they are willing to fight for the United States, but if he does not wish to volunteer at this time he may qualify his answer to that question in many ways. Example: "Yes, when drafted," "Yes, when conditions change", "Yes, if matters are clarified."

The only time one volunteers is an unqualified yes. In the event he gives the qualified answer, this one form is all the papers he fills out. This form is sent not to the Army, but to the WRA in Washington. If the individual wishes to make an unqualified yes, in other words, wishes to join the Army, he then fills out the application for voluntary induction, and that form is sent to the War Department along with the form of request for transfer from his former local board to the local board in Powell, Wyoming.

FRED MIYASATO: If the registrant answers Question No. 27. as follows, "Yes, if our citizenship status is cleared", how will that answer be interpreted in your opinion?

LIEUTENANT MCDANIELS: The Army will not see the answer. The WRA in Washington will go ahead and investigate for the indefinite leave.

FRED MIYASATO: If the registrant answers "No" on that particular question, how will that be interpreted?

LIEUTENANT MCDANIELS: Again the Army or War Department will not see questionnaires and they will have no contact with the individual. He will be the same as any others here seeking outside employment. When and if the Americans of Japanese descent are taken in through Selective Service, it will be done as always in the past through registration and clarifying through various registration. This has no bearing at all with the Selective Service. There has been up until now, no suggestion that Selective Service will enter into the picture.

FRED MIYASATO: In other words, this registration is only for statistical purpose by the WRA and this registration will be connected with the Army only when the registrant has made an unqualified yes. Then he is required to fill in the Form 165 which is the voluntary enlistment. Is that statement correct?

LIEUTENANT MCDANIELS: Yes, that is right.

Those who volunteer, their papers will go to the Assistant Chief of Staff, Military Intelligence, War Department, General Staff Pentagon Building, Washington, D.C., and those who are not volunteering but are merely filling out the statistical information for the WRA, their papers go to the Provost Marshal General, Munition Building, Washington, D.C., Attention Joint Board.

FRED MIYASATO: In other words, regardless of whether the men of qualified military age answers the question No. 27, they will be drafted?

LIEUTENANT MCDANIELS: At this time there has been no provision or consideration as to draft. It is purely the volunteers that are being taken into the Army. If in the future the Army sees fit to draft Americans of Japanese descent, the Selective Service will induct them as in the case of all other Americans.

FRED MIYASATO: Regardless of how they answer question No. 27 they will be drafted?

LIEUTENANT MCDANIELS: Only if he answers unqualified yes, that means he wishes to volunteer at this time;

(Signed) Lt. Ray McDaniels  
(Signed) F. Miyasato

February 12, 1943 (Copy)  
July 19, 1945 (re-copied)

ADDENDUM 5

Sentinel Supplement -- Series 32  
Heart Mountain, Wyoming

February 18, 1943

Project Director Issues Statement on Registration

To Evacuee Residents at Heart Mountain:

The registration now being conducted at Heart Mountain is Not a matter that can be decided by a majority vote in block meetings. Every individual over 17 years of age must register now. The kind of answers given shall be decided by the individual.

Any willful interference, threat, intimidation, or false rumor is a violation of the Espionage and Sedition Laws of the United States and carries a penalty of a \$10,000 fine or imprisonment for not more than 20 years, or both. It is the duty of every citizen to report any such violation.

Citizens should answer an unqualified "Yes" or "No" to question No. 28.

When question No. 27 is answered "Yes" it does not mean you are volunteering for army duty, To volunteer for army duty you must fill out Form 165.

Questions No.s 27 and 28 are loyalty questions. If this question is answered "No" it will indicate disloyalty unless qualified by good and sufficient personal reasons."

Guy Robertson  
Project Director.

## ADDENDUM 6

### An Address to the Assembled Delegates of Heart Mountain

Gentlemen:

I need not remind you of the gravity of the choice that lies before you. Our actions from henceforth will guide the destinies of 150,000 men, women and children in this United States. It will be interpreted in a thousand different ways, by a thousand different people, both powerful and negligent. The very enormity of our task is surpassed only by its solemnity. For the time for flightiness, for quibbling, for petty argument, has passed, forever. Everything in our hearts must be discarded except for the main issues now at hand.

Before you, ready to be voted upon, is the momentous document ever presented to the American public. It is in principle the most important document to be recorded in the pages of history. It stems from the principles which freed America from the tyranny of Great Britain in 1776. Its importance surpasses even that monumental work because now, we are testing whether the principles for which the early patriots died, are true to fact.

Upon your shoulders rests the tremendous burden of choosing a future in a country yours by birth and choice. Upon your shoulders rests the future political, social and economic liberties of a whole race. Need I emphasize in more detail the work ahead of you?

There may be amongst you those who are in doubt, whose minds are weakening under the responsibility before you. There may be others who are opposed to the task confronting you. To them I cannot answer otherwise than this: "If you weaken now, if you drop by the wayside if the task ahead of you has assumed such proportions that its very immensity weakens the nerve fibers in your beliefs, then now is the time for you to drop out." However, we must allow each to make his own decision.

Our problem is one that has been faced in the past, courageously sometimes, other times cowardly. Those who shirked their responsibilities has been altogether forgotten and buried in their stigma. But to those who persevered, who continued the fight, there is ample reward in the historical records, in the emblazoned symbols of freedom and justice the world over.

## Addendum 7

An Address to the Congress

Heart Mountain, Wyoming  
February 11, 1943

Psychologically speaking, our Government lost one of its greatest opportunities of combating its enemies, the Axis Nations, by not having accepted the Americans of Japanese Ancestry as true Americans; and, if it did not resort to the now accomplished forcible and unconstitutional mass evacuation.

As any psychologist knows, when segregated group of persons, because of their color only are condemned without hearing, and without cause, something in their soul has been injured. On the other hand, if full trust had been accorded them, without the forcible mass evacuation, we firmly believe that many of us would have been extremely proud and willing to accept the invitation of our Government to volunteer.

The minds of many of us are still shrouded in doubt and confusion as to the true motives of our Government when they invite our voluntary enlistment at the present time. It has not explained why some American citizens who patriotically volunteered, at the beginning of the War, were rejected by the Army. Furthermore, our Government has permitted damaging propaganda to continue against us. Also she has failed to reinstae us in the eyes of the American public. We are placed on the spot, and our course of action is on the balance of the scale of justice; for our Government's honest interpretation of our stand will mean absolute vindication and

admission of the wrong committed. On the other hand, if interpreted otherwise by misrepresentations and misunderstandings, it will amount to renewed condemnation of this group.

Although we have yellow skins, we, too, are Americans. We have an American up-bringing. Therefore, we believe in fair play. Our firm conviction is that we would be useless Americans if we did not assert our constitutional rights no; for, unless our status as citizens is clered and we are really fighting for the high ideals upon which our nation was based, how can we say to the ~~White~~ American Buddies in the Armed Forces that we are fighting for the peretuation of Democracy, especially when our fathers, mothers and families are in concentration camps even though they are not chaged with any crimes?

We believe that our Nation's good faith is to be found in whether it moves to restore full privileges at the earliest opportunity.