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WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY
Heart Mountain Relocation Project
Heart Mountain, Wyoming

MEMORANDUM

March 10, 1944

To: M. O. Anderson, Assistant Project Director

From: A. T. Hansen, Community Analyst

Subject: Weekly report for March 3-9.

At the time of last week's report, the Analyst leaned toward the opinion that the crisis with reference to selective service was past and that the community was gradually coming to accept it as an unpleasant but inevitable fact. He felt no great certainty in this view, but it was his best guess. He expected that perhaps two or three determined individuals would not show up for their pre-induction physical examinations, but that all others, even those who felt distinctly unenthusiastic about it, would report. This opinion seemed to have some basis. News of arrests in other Centers in the previous week had added a note of grim realism to the thinking of people and appeared to have a sobering effect. A notice published in the Sentinel Supplement asking a considerable list of persons to contact the project selective service office produced a quick and unanimous response. All of the first group reported for their preinduction physicals. Those in favor of refusing to accept the draft unless and until certain concessions were forthcoming moved more cautiously and showed their fears of trouble to themselves by frequent references to stool-pigeons or "dogs". Public feeling, though still deep and widespread, was less fervid than it had been earlier. The Community Council was working on a dignified petition to President Roosevelt, accepting the draft but requesting some rectifications, which seemed to offer a promise of serving as a vehicle for a moderate community protest that would weaken the position of the extremists.

The Analyst was wrong. What he did not know was that during the apparent calm the Fair Play Committee was strengthening its position, mobilizing the support of the community, and preparing for more vigorous future action. Another thing he did not know was how rapidly people could forget the arrests that had taken place in the other Centers. Of course, they still remembered them in an abstract sort of way. But since, after the first jarring news, little further information was forthcoming, the arrests faded from memory. They became distant

and unreal and ceased to play an important role in the people's wishful thinking.

Let us look at some of the developments. Confusion preceded the calling of the three groups that went for the preinduction physical examination on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of the current week. The list of names to be checked for addresses did not arrive from the Park County Draft Board until Tuesday, February 29. This meant less than a week remained to take care of all of the details. The project selective service office did its part with dispatch and then waited for the official notices to the men to come. On Friday notices for the contingent leaving Tuesday reached the Center. By Saturday noon the rest had not arrived. This delay created much uncertainty and some justified griping. The men wanted to know if they would have to report even if their notices did not come. The answer given them was, "No". When their notices did finally arrive Saturday afternoon, they had to be specially delivered by one of the appointed personnel. This action did not make those who were to leave on Monday overjoyed, because they had about decided that they would not need to go. Subsequently, some of the block managers questioned the right of the man who took the notices around Saturday to make such a special delivery.

The unfortunate psychological effect of this confusion was sharpened by the fact that many evacuees had read or heard a statement by the head of selective service in California to the effect that draftees were notified ten days in advance of the date for reporting for preinduction physical. To the evacuees, this was evidence that, even in the mechanical details of selective service, they were not being treated as other Americans were. The project selective service office has lodged a protest with the local draft board. It is to be hoped that the mistake is not repeated.

The Community Council petitions ran into considerable difficulty and have left few people feeling particularly satisfied— unless it be the Fair Play Committee. Special block meetings were called Saturday evening to present the petitions and get signatures. In three blocks, the program went off all right, in some others moderately well. In three, the meetings blew up, due apparently to Fair Play Committee interference, and no signatures were obtained. In another, trouble developed subsequently, the Councilman resigned, and no signatures came in from that block although many had signed Saturday evening. In one other, there were none for undetermined reasons. In still others, there were such low totals for both petitions combined as 12, 15, and 52. All in all, there were no signatures from five blocks, less than 53 from three others. A further evidence of lack of support is that on Monday a number of signers came into the Council office and scratched their names. Perhaps, more would have done so if the Council had not closed the doors and sent off the petitions.

The objections of the Fair Play Committee were that the petitions were too mild. Of course, there was the additional, probably unstated, objection that the Committee wanted the job to be done its way.

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There was a small amount of opposition from the opposite direction, as well. At least one man refused to sign the Nisei petition because it asked for some things that had already been granted, e. g., admission to Civil Service. A few others did not think it wise to appear to be bargaining with the government.

There is reason to believe that the petition does not indicate the real feelings and wishes of very many residents. It may have fallen between the opposers and the cooperators, and hit very few people. The total result looks quite impressive, 922 Nisei names and 1208 Issei names, but it is not a very accurate expression of community sentiment.

The Analyst has heard from a few sources that the Council itself was never very enthusiastic about the petitions. According to these opinions, it took action only because Councils in other relocation centers were doing so and it felt a certain compulsion to keep in step. Its reluctance was due (1) To a sense of futility, to the belief that petitions do not accomplish anything. (2) To divisions within the Council so marked that it could agree only on a compromise that satisfied few members. (3) To the position of the Council as a buffer between the community and the administration in a situation in which there was intense feeling with strong anti-administration connotations. Under these conditions, it would have been pleasanter to have just ignored the subject.

The activities of the Fair Play Committee have been referred to a number of times. Its opening gun in the present week was fired Saturday with the distribution throughout the community of a mimeographed circular. This stated the intention to refuse military service until discrimination had been abolished and the injustices of evacuation erased. It also announced a meeting for Sunday afternoon. The meeting lasted from about 1:30 to 4:00. Perhaps this meeting explains why some persons came into the Council office on Monday to take their names off the petitions. Monday morning representatives of the Committee met with the Community Council and criticized the Council's handling of the petitions. Tuesday night, there was another Fair Play meeting. Two items about this are of particular interest. First, the five men who had failed to report for their physical examinations were in attendance. They told the assemblage they had been questioned and then released. Those in charge of the gathering are reported to have taken the attitude of "You see, nothing really happens if you don't report; the Fair Play committee will take care of you." The next morning seven men did not show up to go for the physicals. The second item of interest is that a man asked one of the leaders of the Fair Play Committee point-blank if the leader would advise him to report or not to report the following morning. The leader is said to have stalled for a minute or two and then to have told the questioner he would see him privately afterwards. Thereupon he proceeded with his well-worn diatribe about evacuation and injustice. This and some other bits of information suggest that the leaders of FPC are trying to be very cagey and careful about their public utterances.

Thursday copies of Rocky Shrimp for March 6 arrived at Heart Mountain. The feature article is about FPC. It is very favorable. It states that

the administration is following a hands-off policy at present and that the FPC program has the "tacit approval" of the Community Council. Many Heart Mountain readers, increasingly well-impressed by FPC during the preceding days, were probably further reassured by this article. It made FPC almost respectable and less dangerous than it seemed earlier.

This same day, Thursday, an incorrect report of the results of the physical examinations became current in the community. A telegram from one of the examinees had arrived Wednesday night saying, "Everybody rejected, be home...." People were perplexed. FPC had an explanation. Their protest to the Attorney General and the Secretary of War, made a week earlier, had born fruit. The draft was being stopped by blanket rejections at first, but there would soon be an announcement. This interpretation was swallowed hook-line-and-sinker by large numbers of residents. The prestige of FPC reached its peak. It was truly wonderful. A Nisei commented somewhat bitterly, "This (leader of FPC) has the Issei eating out of his hand." Many Nisei were doing the same.

Friday morning came disillusionment, or at least the beginning of disillusionment. A wire came from Cheyenne stating that some Heart Mountainers had been accepted, six out of the third contingent after the blanket objections were supposed to be ordered. It is too soon to see what the reaction will be, but one item offers a clue. The Analyst passed on the news in a latrine conversation. The immediate response of his listener was, "Then it's not true what they say about blanket rejections and the draft being stopped." He did not hesitate in abandoning the myth in favor of the fact. One may suspect that in the same moment the reputation of FPC suffered in his estimation.

The same process will likely be aided by the "facts-of-life" talk Friday morning by the Acting Project Director before the Community Council. His explanation of the slow and sure course of justice for draft evaders should destroy or seriously weaken another myth. It could probably not reach the community at a more propitious moment.

/s/ A. T. Hansen

A. T. Hansen

Community Analyst.

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