

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

In reply, please refer to:

Midland Savings Building
Denver 2, Colorado
May 1, 1944

MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. Malcolm E. Pitts
FROM: Angelo M. Girardo
Subject: Report on trip to Heart Mountain

I roamed around Heart Mountain and talked to several evacuees. I'll attempt to list the general sentiments and thinking these discussions revealed. However, since I am not an analyst, it will more than likely be confusing. [redacted] has not discussed his findings with me and it will at least be interesting to see if we found a few identical facts.

Strange as this may seem, there exists a large number of people in this camp who believe Japan will win the war. They advance the theory that the tougher it gets, the tighter Japan will tighten her belt, and the longer it goes, the weaker and more internal strife we will have because of being a democracy. They back this up with the coming election, OPA and WPB chiseling, labor strikes, race riots, etc.

The Rocky Shimo actually influenced a number of the boys. Parents and the FPC were hammering their points, then when the Shimo presented the same points in print, the people were convinced their claims were just, and that possibly with newspaper backing they would be granted. Japanese psychology is to work through a representative. The Shimo assumed this position. The people waited for the Shimo and upon its receipt, it was read and discussed in groups.

Another reason why the Shimo is so popular is because it is anti-JACL. The Issei in general are opposed to JACL. This bitterness is carried over from evacuation. They feel that the JACL shipped them down the river and that in some instances actually put the finger on various individuals. Because of this fact the Issei do not have any faith in the Nisei and they have made every effort to gain control of the camp. In this particular camp they have been successful. I believe that over 90% of the block chairmen and council positions are held by Issei. This has caused a rough situation. These men were never civic leaders and are not too highly educated and hence, are not qualified for



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(Sent to Dillon Myer from Malcolm Pitts, 11 May 44.)

such positions. This group lost more from evacuation than did the Nisei and are naturally more bitter. They give full cooperation on the surface to WRA officials, and then spend all their time in figuring out some way to put them on the spot. The very few qualified leaders who have not yet relocated, say, "We don't want those positions -- why should we jeopardize ourselves -- all we do is argue with the old people; besides old people, such as our parents, could never have had such authority, or been able to enter into politics in Japan, now they are happy and are fulfilling a life's ambition - so let them go".

The FPC is still in existence. As the heat was applied to the FPC they began to shy away from the draft issue and attack tangible things, such as the community enterprise, the Sentinel, and Guy Robertson. Incidentally, a block chairman stated that the block chairmen and council members had drawn up a petition similar to the one presented by the Shimpo, which they were going to send to Iokes but changed their plans when the petition was submitted by the paper, for when the petition was submitted by the paper, they were afraid to openly assume any connection with the FPC or the Shimpo. The FPC had planned on the other centers joining their ranks and felt that with the combined efforts and the Shimpo editorials this would be accomplished. This did not materialize and I was informed that Topas and ~~Head~~ ^{H. F. Smith} were the only projects that leaned slightly toward this. The FPC also thought that relocated evacuees would join them but the relocated people took the opposite side. These two factors knocked the wind out of their sails.

One of the general opinions is that the draft evaders are just plain scared and cowards and they feel 'what's 5 years in prison when one's life is at stake'. Evading the draft hides their true traits and sets them up as martyrs.

There are several rumors floating around. The two most prominent ones are that the Japanese will be used as spearheads and will receive the toughest assignments. They point to the 100th Battalion casualty list as proof of this fact. The other rumor is that Japanese girls in the armed services will be used as prostitutes.

It is felt that a number of the boys will change their minds and enter the army as they are afraid of the treatment they will receive from prisoners in Federal institutions. Several others want to change their minds but feel they will lose face if they break their promise to their parents and the FPC.

Harry Shoiya, an evacuee in the project attorney's office, advised the boys they would be called for induction three times and that they need not appear until the third call was received. The general opinion is that Shoiya is connected with the camp's vice, that he uses the project attorney's office to his advantage, and that his advice is very expensive.

Evacuees working in the hospital and evacuee property section are also making rackets out of their positions. The dental clinic is also another spot where the boys are doing all right. At least two lotteries are in operation in the camp.

The movement of certain people to Tule Lake has not yet been completed. This group's fate has already been decided and they are having a field day out of the situation -- after all, what have they got to lose? I think arrangements should be made to get this group out as soon as possible. The feeling is that we will never be able to sift the chaff from the wheat. These individuals are too smart, they have answered all questions correctly and will continue to do so in the future. Paul Nakadota and Frank Eai come through registration ok and are very prominent members of the FPC. Men such as these have always been pro-Japanese but have been smart enough to outwit WRA officials.

Sgt. Ben Kuroki appeared in public in front of the administration building on Monday, April 24th. The next day I listened to a group of boys in the tire shop discussing him. They felt he was ordered to make this appearance and that it was just more high pressure. They remarked he was not evacuated, had never lived in a relocation center and couldn't possibly know their conditions or how they felt. One Yabo stated that the American public wouldn't accept him as a hero and that he was being shoved down their throats for the Japanese to accept as a hero. The girls went for him in a big way and this, of course, made their boyfriends jealous. These boys feel that draft evaders are better than Kuroki -- they have principals and fortitude enough to demand their rights. I feel Kuroki was deeply disappointed.

At a dinner given in his honor one councilman asked if he would like Japanese entertainment and he replied: "I've never seen or heard it -- I'm an American"! I understand that a fight started over him and his talks in Block 1 Thursday night. As usual, someone threatened to kill him. The boys stated, however, that whenever a Jap gets angry he always threatens to kill someone.

Relocation reminds me of the story you told about the two donkeys and the hay. Evacuees are told to relocate and are given just about everything their hearts desire in camp. They feel that the longer they wait the sweeter WRA makes the pot. Example: At first they were not given grants or transportation, they now receive both. WRA has increased their baggage allowance and will also move their business equipment. One stated: "Uncle realizes he made a mistake in evacuating us and if we howl enough, long enough and loud enough, he will meet all of our demands". One fellow believes they will receive as much as \$2000 if they hold out. I talked to at least 15 who had been out and returned. In almost every instance they returned because they are better off in camp. They get plenty of sleep, very little work, 10-cent shows, vacations, sick leaves, and lots of social life. A number of them feel that when the war is over and there isn't a shortage of manpower, they will be out of work and entirely on their own, whereas if they remain in camp, WRA will take care of them.

A number of people feel that the Sentinel is a project-controlled paper and that true facts and the evacuees' side cannot be printed.

Blocks 1, 9, 14, 22 and 23 seem to be the trouble blocks in this camp.

What the camp needs is a good father confessor. A number of boys told me they had no one to go to for advice or counsel. They don't want to call on a woman social worker.

The little fellow that was in the office trying to find a way back to Heart Mountain looked me up and returned the \$1.50 I gave him. He told me to thank you for what you did and that he had accepted a job in Cleveland. He said your talk put him straight and that if he could have talked to you before, he would not have been in trouble.

Richie resigned Monday. I spent several hours in procurement and have several old orders to clean up.

Main's section is clicking and he is still having fun. The meals are as good as those we had at Tule.

Four Japanese boys called this morning (in Denver) and asked if I would have lunch with them. We dined at the 20th Street Cafe. I don't know who these fellows are or how long they have been in Denver. Their problem was whether they should remain out until called, return to camp, or volunteer. They want to enter the Army but feel that if they return to camp their parents will be against it. I told them if I wanted in, I'd enlist and not return to camp. I think this is what they will do. One of these boys mentioned something about Japanese pictures being shown in the camps and how the Issei enjoyed this and went wild when any reference was made to Pearl Harbor.

The evacuees are here, and they are wondering why people insist on knowing why they were born. Almost every day someone such as a social worker, a relocation officer, etc., interviews them, or hands them a bunch of forms to fill out.