

C O P Y

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

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Project Report No. 47

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STRAWS IN THE WIND

An inquiry into the causes of the recent flare-ups

Yesterday afternoon 670 net workers walked out of the camouflage net sheds. Reluctant workers were persuaded with a length of iron pipe by rowdies. Men strikers loosened the rigging ropes in the women's sheds and so generally interfered with their work that the women workers were forced to join the rest.

Protest was thus expressed against the imposition of the new eight-hour work day for all workers in Manzanar.

OBSERVATION WILL REVEAL THE CAUSES TO BE DEEPER AND THE ROOTS TO BE WIDESPREAD.

At a scheduled appearance of Director Roy Nash in an open-air meeting last evening (cancelled by the departure of the Director for San Francisco at four o'clock) hoodlums, it was rumored, were gathering tomatoes and rocks. On the other hand, Military Police were prepared to quell any disturbance with tear gas, it was rumored.

In this morning's talk to the assembled workers Assistant Director Ned Campbell's direct questioning of certain hecklers revealed the presence of non-worker agitators.

All these events came on the heels of a Center Administration ruling prohibiting the use of the Japanese language in meetings, except when a request for interpretation is made.

Saturday, two nights ago, a sentry in the watch tower opposite Block 35 fired two shots at an unidentified person whom he saw in his searchlight attempting to leave the center. An ambulance arrived on the scene; surgery at the hospital was readied. In spite of a search by Military and Internal police no traces were discovered.

Two evenings, previously, Thursday night, the first kibe meeting in Manzanar was held at Mess hall 15, site of the two Manzanar Citizens Federation meetings. Conducted entirely in Japanese, this kibe assemblage was attended by over six hundred who jammed the overcrowded hall. The noisy feet stomping and shouting demonstrations heard for blocks around compelled the Community Services director, Thomas Temple, who was on the outskirts of the crowd to call out the chairman, Ben Kishi, and suggest the adjournment of the meeting.

The two Manzanar Citizens Federation meetings held previously, while intended as organization affairs drew forth spontaneous expressions of heretofore dormant feelings. The first meeting touched off the outbursts, the second aided and abetted by resentful elements heightened the bitterness.

First Meeting:

Joseph Kurihara--

"I'm an American citizen. I've served under fire with the Army in the first World's War. I haven't done any wrong. Why should I be put in here? Why should you be put in here?" ...Vociferous applause...

Tokutaro Slocum--

"I've fought as a Sergeant Major in the last World's War. I've been in some of the toughest fighting there. I'm here because my Commander-in-Chief, the President of the United States, ordered me in here."

... Scattered handclapping...

Objection by chairman stopped further debate.

Second meeting:

Joseph Kurihara--

"We're not treated as citizens. We're prisoners." ... Loud hoorays...

Tokutaro Slocum--

"If you're not a citizen what country are you a citizen of?"

...Cries of "Shut Up"...

Objection by chairman stopped this verbal exchange.

Kibei meeting: (conducted entirely in Japanese)

Ben Kishi, chairman--

"This meeting is called to consider the resent bulletin on individual relocation where kibei have been discriminated in favor of nisei, who are supposed to be better Americans."

Joseph Kurihara--

"...If anyone, any nisei, thinks he's an American I dare him to try to walk out of this prison. This is no place for us. It's a white man's country."

...Cries of "That's right."...

Speaker in the audience--

"I've been in Manchuria, in China, in the South Seas, and now I'm in America. This is the stinkiest, rottenest place I've ever been in..."

... Loud applause ...

Sam Tateishi, Block Leader of 23--

"We don't have to move out of Blocks 1 and 7 and let them use those for schools and teacher quarters. The government has lots of money. Let it spend some for lumber to build schools and houses... They can take away my citizenship because it doesn't mean a thing, anyway." ...Loud stamping of approval.

Anonymous speaker--

"Some nisei are trying to separate us from our parents. We're all one race; we've got to stick together."

... Boisterous acclamation.

Remarks of the above nature were tumultuously greeted, while Karl Yoneda, exponent of participation in the war effort was loudly hissed and booed. Rabid Americanism factionist Tokutaro Slocum hustled out of the meeting for his own protection. Police escorted Karl Yoneda to his home.

The foregoing succession of events while superficially distinct are all distinctly related. This chronology of events, not an increasing articulation but an intensified license of speech. They are an outgrowth of the fundamental differences between nisei and issei and kibel.

ANY ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND THE LABOR AND COMMUNITY PROBLEMS WHICH ARISE AND A SEARCH FOR THEIR SOLUTIONS MUST BE BASED UPON A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TWO DIVERGENT PULLS OF TWO IDEOLOGIES.

The first group, principally though by no means all nisei, thinks and acts in terms of eventual assimilation into American life.

The second group, mostly kibel and issei, is convinced that this is a race war; that their place is in Japan and her conquered territories.

Characteristics of the first group are a preservation of the American family living, such as talking in English to their children, of encouraging women to participate in community affairs, a faith that their citizenship is being and will be respected by the courts and the vast majority of the American people.

Keeping in touch with their Caucasian friends by correspondence, taking part in typical Pro-America drives--second front petitions and blood banks, cooperation in community projects, a hope that Caucasian school teachers and administrators will have friendly social gatherings, and listening to the Aldrich Family radio programs.

By contrast the second group thinks, believes and now is beginning to act pro-Japan. A nisei speaking in English at a block meeting was interrupted with "Kisama wa keto ka? Nihongo de hanase!" translated: "Are you white trash? Talk in Japanese!"

Their frequent assertions that as long as you have slant eyes and black hair you'll always be stigmatized as a Jap here... that this is a white man's country... that the utterances of Congressman Leland S. Ford and Assistant District Attorney Clyde C. Shoemaker of Los Angeles are proof that our citizenship is going to be taken away and so it doesn't mean a thing and never will...

Disparagement of all community projects... an easy complaisance to administration rulings but a suspicion, distrust and resentment of administration personnel and policies expressed thusly at one meeting: "Koyu koto wa hakujin no maye dewa hanase nai." Translated: "We can't talk of these things before the white man." Children talking mostly in Japanese.

Popularity of Japanese cultural activities, such as recordings, ondo dancing, singing of nationalistic airs... "We are getting this fair treatment only because American prisoners of war will be mistreated by Japan if they clamp down on us." ... An encouragement to hoodlum elements that the Pro-America faction are seeking advantages for themselves and have reported to the FBI so many of the fathers now interned at the various detention camps.

NO DATE neither the administration nor the WRA has given any recognition to citizenship or any encouragement on the stand taken by the first group. There has been no widespread publicity as to the aims, purposes, and ultimate goals of the WRA.

Because of these omissions those in the second group have been strengthened in their beliefs and their indoctrinations and proselytings.

The NET RESULT is this: the vast preponderant majority who have been torn between the two pulls, who have been confused, who are fence-sitters and opportunists, have veered to the influence of the Pro-Japan Group.

AS A CONSEQUENCE there has been a listlessness in such projects as the Camouflage net factory-- a susceptibility to strike on one pretext or another--an intimidation of other "sucker", "Jap soab" workers who wished to continue unmolested in net work as well as other projects.

'Teen age youngsters openly mock and heckle and threaten those who take a pre-America stand. Administration rulings are flaunted. Gangs are constantly picking fights or exercising coercion.

SOLUTION: Prompt and regular paydays, definite issuance of clothing, etc. are but superficial correction. The only permanent solution must be by two means: First, by sustaining and giving aid and comfort to the First Group. Office-holding and having their own communities of like-minded people, self-governed and self-directed are some recognitions which should be accorded. Second, by drastic surgery. It may be cruel to separate families, perhaps, but it is more cruel to keep dissenting elements together. Separate camps should be maintained for those having the differing loyalties and ideologies of the Second Group.

SEGREGATION: This can be accomplished by open and formal judicial proceedings and investigative hearings. Citizenship and confirmatory testimonials and oaths of allegiance publicly administered are means of determining the First Group.

OPEN DISASTER AND WRECKAGE TO THE ENTIRE WRA PROGRAM is invited by continuing under the present set-up. This definite undercurrent trend will result inevitably in a military camp--a tacit admission of the dismal failure of the WRA policy.

THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRO-AMERICA COMMUNITY. This model village can be the pattern and blueprint for subsequent developments.

CONCLUSION: Creation of the Pro-America Center can be the object of pride and serve as the prize exhibit of the goal of the WRA program. Only by this specimen can present and future Congressional appropriations be justified. When eventual Congressional investigations do look into the operations of the various relocation centers only a Center built upon such Pro-American foundations will stand the most critical assaults and closest scrutiny.

In time, when the hysteria and hatreds of war will have passed by and the calm of peace once again pervades this land, these truly relocation centers, not concentration camps, will serve as monuments to Democracy and the enlightened agencies of the American people.