

JAPANESE BEHIND BARBED WIRE—

Getting Nisei to Leave Centers Is One of WRA's Toughest Jobs

.... EDITORIAL

(Third in a series)

THREE questions popped up in our mind during our belated investigation and study of the Japanese relocation problem.

The first is, why has it taken so long for the WRA to segregate disloyal Japs and patriotic Nisei (Japanese-Americans)? Plans are under way now to place the known and suspected disloyal in a separate camp at Tule lake in California.

The second question is, why have the army and navy failed to take young Nisei into the service on a basis similar to induction of other American citizens?

Third, why are able-bodied men and women by the thousands remaining in relocation centers like that at Heart Mountain, when the manpower situation is so critical throughout the country?

We received some partial answers during our visit at the Heart Mountain center last week. A big factor, we suspect, is downright inefficiency, prejudice and lack of preparedness on the part of our government and its agencies.

The vast majority of Japanese-Americans in these relocation camps are loyal. The excuse for their having been evacuated en masse and put behind barbed wire was our own failure to plan ahead when we knew that war with Japan was inevitable and our bowing to prejudice and hysteria on the west coast.

All feasible investigations have been made as to loyalty, and, as pointed out by Columnist Burton Heath; the WRA will know no more next Christmas than it did last Easter about who is loyal and who is not, barring overt anti-American acts.

Yet, he points out, avowed pro-Japanese have been left mingled indiscriminately with American citizens—left free to taunt, argue, tease, threaten and cajole the Japanese-Americans; to weaken their Americanism by reiterating the injustice of their incarceration.

They recall to them how little constitutional rights mean if one has a yellow skin and mongoloid features; to ask them why they should expect they can mingle with Caucasian-Americans on a basis of friendship and equality.

Because pro-Japanese, self-avowed, were left mingled with pro-Americans of Japanese ancestry, Caucasian Americans had no way of knowing which was which, and too often have adopted the very unfortunate attitude of General Dewitt that "a Jap's a Jap, and it makes no difference if he is an American citizen."

Segregation of bad Japs from good Japanese-Americans is the first step in correcting an injustice done 70,000 American citizens, deprived of liberty and property for reason of race and color. Let this program be carried out with utmost facility.

Of the 9,189 evacuees at Heart Mountain an estimated 1,250 will go to the Tule lake camp. Some of these are known to be disloyal; others are members of families headed by Japanese whose loyalties remain with their fatherland.

(Cont'd. Page 2)

(Cont'd. from Page 1)

ONE of the biggest headaches of the war relocation authority at Heart Mountain and other centers is the reluctance of evacuees to leave the temporary "havens" and begin to rehabilitate, by the sweat of their brows, their marred lives.

Donald R. Sabin, assistant chief of the WRA employment division, Washington, D. C., formerly of Laramie, spoke out to the evacuees on this problem in plain language last week. Sabin's visit at the camp coincided with ours. He characterized the problem as one of the main bottlenecks of the WRA program.

"The general public, without knowledge of all the facts, is bound to ask why loyal Americans continue to accept life in government centers when there is such a shortage of manpower," declared Sabin, one-time extension crops and soils specialist here, later state head of the AAA.

Some of the evacuees see the light. Joe Carroll, employment chief at Heart Mountain, formerly connected with the state WPA office, reported that 135 had left the camp during July on indefinite leaves while 217 were granted seasonal passes. All, he said, had been officially certified as to their loyalty.

There is a reason, of course, for the reluctance of many Japanese and Nisei to leave the security they have found in a center like that at Heart Mountain. Many know from bitter experience that feeling against them is strong in some communities. Family ties among these people are potent and naturally fears of ill-treatment and discrimination out in the world make these ties even stronger. The aim of the WRA is to scatter these people out over a wide territory, to practically lose them in large population centers in contrast to their former custom of congregating, forming their own communities. Such a program would present bugaboos to any minority group. Nevertheless it appears to be their only possible salvation. It seems that wherever they begin to congregate in large numbers, the Caucasian residents get alarmed.

An editorial in the Heart Mountain Sentinel, weekly newspaper published at Cody for the center, sounds a bright note as follows:

"Persons leaving the isolation of the WRA centers for the first time are amazed at the decent public treatment accorded them. As they go farther away from the camp and the west coast, their fears vanish and the heartaches of the past year and a half seem almost like dreams. The transition back into America's life-stream is neither painful nor difficult."

But despite the strong feeling they know exists against them in California, many of these people still entertain hopes that they will be able to return there after the war. Many still hold tenaciously to title of property on the Pacific coast, intending to return when they are permitted. While attempting to persuade them to seek homes elsewhere, the WRA is meantime acting as a sort of guardian or executor for the property the Japanese and Nisei have had to leave. This includes some 300 hotels.

Last Aug. 1 a total of 842 residents of Heart Mountain were away from the center on seasonal leave, meaning they had accepted temporary work on farms, railroads and in other places where their services are required for a limited time. On the same date 1,076 residents had been granted indefinite leave, or permission to quit the center and take jobs and reestablish themselves as loyal Americans. Last fall approximately 1,200 residents left the center temporarily to help with beet-topping, bean threshing and other farm work in various parts of Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska and Idaho.

But not all the evacuees are farmers. Instead of the concept held that there are 10,000 potential farm hands at Heart Mountain, figures reveal that only 1,267 adults have an agricultural background. The others, including large numbers of aged persons, women and children, represent a wide cross-section of occupational skills as in any community.

Japanese Behind Barbed Wire

Heart Mountain Relocation Center's Population About Same As Laramie's; WRA Plan Described

..... Editorial

NOTE: The writer spent a little less than a day and one-half last week touring and inspecting the Heart Mountain relocation center, located about half way between Powell and Cody on part of the Shoshone irrigation project of northeastern Wyoming.

It is our hope to avoid, in this report, the shortcomings of a magazine writer, who, a few years ago, spent 20 minutes in Laramie and then wrote an article on our collective attitude on an important political question.

The Heart Mountain center has a population of Japanese and Japanese-Americans (Nisei) comparable to Laramie's total population. At one time the center pushed Laramie out of its niche as Wyoming's third largest city. The center's population as of Aug. 1 was 9,189, roughly 60 per cent of it made up of U. S.-born persons—American citizens.

It is easier to get facts about the Heart Mountain camp than Laramie because of the availability

of records, reports and tabulated surveys and investigations. But to draw any definite and overall conclusions about ideologies, political and social aspirations and attitudes of the residents would be folly on our part. We are convinced that they are as divergent there as in any settlement of comparable size in the U. S. Hence, anything we may write in this series of articles is only as we saw and heard. Our conclusions, necessarily vague, are to be general. So many irresponsible and false statements have been made in regard to relocation centers—many of them from high places—the time has come for objective, unprejudiced reporting.

We are most impressed with the almost insurmountable problem of what to do with the more than 100,000 evacuees who were uprooted from their homes and way of life on the west coast and placed in inland camps. If we could inspire interest in the problem, a desire to study facts, eliminating hatreds and prejudices, we should consider our effort worthwhile.

OUR visit was a planned tour as guests of the WRA, hence we could expect a certain amount of "window-dressing" for our benefit. We suspect that one of the reasons for inviting the press to visit the center was to offset some of the hate-inspiring and prejudiced material dispensed by a Denver paper. While we had the service of guides, we were free to go where we chose, to talk with anyone—even to peer into the attics and cellars. We had what was called "typical" meals at the center, we visited the working and living quarters of the evacuees and Caucasian appointed personnel. We don't think we would be happy at Heart Mountain!

Guy Robertson, whose face, when he's talking to you, looks as if it were about to break into a smile, gave us some background concerning the underlying philosophy of the war relocation authority and the history of the relocation movement. Several signs posted around the administrative building say, "Always Keep Your Sense of Humor." We imagine that Robertson sometimes has to read the signs over ten times before taking a course of action.

The relocation center setup is similar to army operations. It follows in some aspects a kind of communistic plan. The buildings, frame and tarpaper, are like army barracks and the camp seems to be laid out similar to an army training camp.

The locale, the appearance of the country, at first flush are not dissimilar to the upper end of the Big Hollow this side of Sheep Mountain. The tawny, treeless flats are in sharp contrast to the towering backdrop of Heart Mountain which seems to resemble a heart from one direction, but is a great near-perpendicular palisade from the camp.

These camps, Robertson explained furnish a "haven" for evacuated people. "This is not a concentration camp or a prison camp," he said. "These people have no criminal records. Our job is to relocate them; to give them an opportunity to get out and produce, to make their own living again."

The underlying philosophy of the WRA, he explained, is that loyal American citizens of Japanese descent, as well as law-abiding non-citizens, should not be confined in the centers any longer than necessary to reestablish them in normal communities outside of critical war zones. A comprehensive system of checking on individual backgrounds, associations and loyalty has been devised with the federal bureau of investigation and the military intelligence organizations, and evacuees who have a clean record, and who can find means of support outside the centers, are permitted to leave either for permanent or temporary employment.

The WRA, Robertson told us, believes that fundamental American principles of democracy are involved in the mass evacuation of an American minority, and it is doing everything possible to return loyal Americans to normal life. It must be emphasized that there is no implication of disloyalty in residence in a WRA center. The known disloyal are in internment camps operated by the department of justice, and are to be confused with WRA centers. These with known pro-Japanese sympathies now in the centers are being segregated by a comprehensive process, and will be placed in the Tule lake center in northern California beginning about Sept. 1. Every effort is being made, meanwhile, to relocate the known loyal in various parts of the country where they will be acceptable.

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
August 19, 1943

Chester Rowell *Stressing Issues That Have Not Been Raised*

We are having an epidemic of protests against bugaboos which do not exist.

One of them unfortunately received the implied sanction of Commander Doane Waring of the American Legion, in his protest against an assumed proposal to put the whole world on an American-supported W. P. A., by which we were permanently to feed everybody everywhere who could not or would not feed himself.

Of course the simple answer is that there is no such movement.

If anybody disagrees with the actual plans, that is his right. But he should do his arguing against the plan as it is, not against a bugaboo which is not.

Another bugaboo-chase is represented, rather absurdly, by the application of a San Diego group for the incorporation of a "No Japs, Inc." organization. The major purpose announced is "to prevent the return of any Japanese to the Pacific Coast." It also proposes that no Japanese become citizens of the United States.

If this means that no Japanese shall return to the Pacific Coast during the war, it is purposeless and meaningless. Under military orders, there can be no such return. The Supreme Court has already sustained the right of the military authorities to issue such orders. The Army will not change

them, and there is no thought on the part of the War Department to order them changed. Once more —there is no such movement!

This particular San Diego application might be dismissed as a mere freak, if it were not that other and incomparably more powerful forces are misusing their access to print to howl continuously against this same alleged movement. They nowhere assert that it exists, nor specify what, where or who it is. They merely assume it, be deliberately confusing a protest against the present return of the Japanese, which nobody proposes, into an outcry against ever returning them. If they wish to be understood that there is any such movement, as to the war period, they should specify. They cannot do so. There is no such movement!

There is, to be sure, an Army order permitting the temporary return, on leave, by Army permission, of United States soldiers of Japanese race in uniform. This leave is given only in exceptional cases, for a reason, and there has not been a single reported instance in which it made any trouble. One such soldier, found in Oregon without leave, was promptly turned over to the Army, for its discipline.

But as to the other proposition, to exclude all persons of Japanese race from citizenship, and to ban-

ish them permanently from California after the war, there is the unfortunate obstacle of the Constitution of the United States.

Those born in Japan are and always have been ineligible to citizenship. Even these, however, have the constitutional right of residence and of the equal protection of the laws. Those born here are citizens, by the Constitution, any law of Japan, to the contrary notwithstanding.

Neither California nor the Federal Government has the constitutional power to pass a law forbidding persons who have the right of residence in any part of the United States to go freely to any other part, and to enjoy, there, the equal protection of the laws applying to all other persons. The Constitution says this, and the courts have uniformly construed it to mean this.

Only an amendment to the Constitution could change it. If such an amendment were in general terms, it would apply to a large share of our population of European ancestry. If it applied specifically to Japanese, it would not receive the vote of States which would want to include Negroes, Chinese, Mexicans or Filipinos. It just can't be done.

After all, the Constitution is still the supreme law of the land.

WASHINGTON POST
August 26, 1943

Behold! A Molehill

The final report of the Dies Committee on the War Relocation Authority fell pathetically short of its advance publicity. For weeks, the subcommittee which conducted the investigation under the chairmanship of Representative Costello of California gave out intimations of spectacular disclosures. We shuddered in expectation of having a hideous black dragon revealed to us in all its ferocity. And lo, the sequel to all this fanfare is a mere pipsqueak. The worst that Mr. Costello has uncovered is that the WRA released from its relocation centers 23 members of an organization called the Butoku-Kai—which turns out to be nothing more frightening than a fencing society.

And now, to cap our disappointment, comes a minority report from the third member of the Costello subcommittee, Representative Eberharter of Pennsylvania. "After careful consideration," he declares, "I cannot avoid the conclusion that the report of the majority is prejudiced, and that most of its statements are not proven." Mr. Eberharter's report is worth reading in full. It affords a clear, impartial appraisal of the task confronting WRA and of the way in which that task has been met. The conclusion to which this minority investigator came was that "the War Relocation Authority has acted, by and large, efficiently and capably, and has carried out the spirit and intent of the President's executive order under which it was established."

The subcommittee majority emerged from its long researches with three recommendations: (1) that the WRA accelerate its segregation program; (2) that a new board be set up to investigate evacuees who apply for release from the relocation centers; and (3) that the WRA "inaugurate a thoroughgoing program of Americanization for those Japanese who remain in the centers." As Representative Eberharter has sensibly pointed out, the first of these recommendations has already been undertaken and the second would merely establish a wholly unnecessary superboard to do what the WRA is already doing with great care. As for the third recommendation, it is going to be somewhat difficult to Americanize American citizens who have been deprived of their fundamental citizenship rights.

Jap Relocation Center At Heart Mountain Hums With Sounds of Industry

By JEANNE RIHA

Heart Mountain, Wyo., Aug. 21.—Not a drowsy, dreamy little settlement is the Japanese war relocation center at Heart Mountain, Wyo., even though its 19 blocks of tarpapered barracks are unshaded and blistering hot in an August sun, even though its roads are unpaved and dust clouded.

Still one can hear the mingled sounds of industry—the beat of hammers in the shoe repair shop, the hum of machines in the carpentry building—and see the proofs of hard labor—the overalled farmers bent over irrigation ditches in the fields, the women and girls picking peas, the children carrying pails of water for victory gardens that brighten the front yards of almost every barrack.

In February of this year, when the project had been under way six months, 11,147 persons occupied the 456 barracks but on August 1 the population had dwindled to 9,189 because of the success of the employment office in relocating American citizens of Japanese descent in outside jobs.

Within the project 4,758, or slightly more than 40 per cent are employed, with 1,267 workers on the agricultural portion of the program alone. While this is a significant number, it does not mean, as many Americans think, that there are as many potential farmers as there are project residents since, in the Heart Mountain center, as in any other community, there is a wide cross section of occupational skills represented.

At the present time there are 1,809 persons engaged in wholesale and retail trade, 1,223 in personal service, 261 in industrial trades and 142 in professional work. Many of these were once prominent in their communities and for them especially the change in environment and working conditions has been difficult. A dentist in the clinic, a graduate of the University of Southern California and formerly a prominent man, now working without running water and with only the bare necessities is an example of what adjustment has been necessary under the relocation plan.

Produce Being Raised

Just how important is the agricultural side of the project can be indicated by the fact that of the 45 cents worth of food allowed for each

evacuee daily, the project is required by the government to produce 15 cents worth of food. This is being done; 1,254 acres of vegetables, consisting of 42 crops, have been planted. These include 198 acres of dried beans, 110 acres of potatoes, 50 of onions, 44 of peas, besides sweet and popcorn, cabbage, beets, carrots and several purely Japanese vegetables. Two hundred acres of hay are expected to be cut in fall in addition to 100 acres of spring grains.

According to Glen Hartman, chief of agriculture and industries, year-round supplies of potatoes and beans are expected and many months' supplies of the 40 other vegetables. Any surplus will be shipped to other Japanese relocation centers in exchange for their produce.

Garage Workers Give Japs Vote Of Confidence

By the Associated Press.

DES MOINES, Aug. 27.—Two American-born Japanese mechanics from an Arkansas relocation center have been given a 13-to-2 vote of confidence by their fellow workers in a Des Moines garage.

Upon request of Federal relocation authorities and because he needed mechanics, A. B. Chambers, president of an automobile agency, hired Fred Kitagawa, 31, and Hester Ishii, 35, both former Los Angeles residents.

Everything went smoothly for a few days. Then "objections" were heard. Mr. Chambers called a meeting of his garage employees.

"I left it up to the men whether they wanted Kitagawa and Ishii to work or whether they didn't. I offered to pay their fare back to the relocation center. The men took a vote. It was 13 to 2 in favor of keeping them.

"The general attitude of our men is that Kitagawa and Ishii are American citizens who have become victims of circumstances," Mr. Chambers said.

OREGON JOURNAL (Portland)
August 18, 1943

Pro-Japanese Testimonial

SEATTLE, Aug. 15.—To the Editor—Much time has elapsed since the war began, yet predictions that people of Japanese ancestry in America would attempt deeds of sabotage to hinder the war effort have been unfulfilled, for no sabotage or disloyal activity has been perpetrated by any of the many thousands of the evacuees who have been relocated, and, without exception, they have merited the trust and confidence which has been placed in them.

This writer believes that those who are the best qualified to understand the character of others are those who have known them on an equal social status. I have found, through years of acquaintance and friendship among these people, that inherent in them are the virtues of honesty, integrity and indwelling devotion to America.

Albert D. Bonus.