

THE TRUTH ABOUT RELOCATION

An address delivered by Dillon S. Myer,
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The removal of some 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry from the Pacific Coast during the spring and summer of 1942 posed a problem for the government of the United States unlike any it had ever faced before. Some aspects of the problem by now have been solved, but there are many others which still must be dealt with, not alone by the War Relocation Authority, but by the American people as a whole. There are many different courses which the War Relocation Authority might follow in the treatment of the evacuees now in the relocation centers. On the one extreme, we might adopt the policy of turning all evacuees loose from the relocation centers at one time, to go wherever they like. At the other extreme, we might follow a policy, advocated by some, of keeping all the evacuees detained for the duration of the war. Our present course is charted for good reason somewhere between these two extremes.

For some time now -- but more particularly in recent weeks -- there has been a tremendous amount of misinformation and some deliberate deception about the way we are managing the relocation centers and the way we are returning many of the evacuees to private life. So today I want to tell you how we are conducting our program and why we have adopted the policies we are now following.

But first let me review some of the background facts. You will remember that when the evacuation was first announced -- in early March of 1942 -- the people of Japanese ancestry were told simply that they must move out of the prescribed coastal zone. Nothing was said at that time about detention in government centers. It was the hope of the War Department that many of the Japanese and Japanese-Americans would move out voluntarily and resettle inland on their own initiative. Throughout most of March in 1942, there was no restriction on the movements of a person of Japanese ancestry once he had left the military area. Clearly, there was no charge or even implication that all persons of Japanese descent were disloyal. The real point was simply that their presence complicated the problems of defense in a sensitive and threatened military zone. Remember that as soon as war broke out, the intelligence agencies apprehended all the enemy aliens they suspected of being dangerous to national security; so the Japanese population had been cleared of that supposedly most dangerous element.

During the first weeks of March, some 8,000 people of Japanese descent closed out their business affairs, packed up their belongings, and moved eastward. Some went to the eastern part of California, which was then outside the area designated for evacuation, while others moved to communities in Utah, Colorado, and other states of the inter-mountain region. Within a few days after the War Relocation Authority was established -- on March 18 -- events began to occur which indicated plainly that voluntary relocation would not be a feasible policy. The mass movement of such a large group of people in such a short time would have caused trouble regardless of the racial antecedents of the migratory group. But in this case, the problem was further complicated by the fact that the evacuees were racially related to an enemy nation and were being excluded

from the Pacific Coast for reasons which were not made entirely clear. So it's not surprising that those who moved voluntarily ran into difficulties and by the last week of March, the situation was such that further Federal action was essential. On March 27, the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command issued the so-called "freeze" order and two days later voluntary migration came abruptly to an end. Plans were immediately drawn up to carry out the evacuation from that point forward under Army supervision in accordance with a systematic schedule.

About this same time the War Relocation Authority began to formulate some of its first plans for relocation. Since the most likely area for immediate relocation was the inter-mountain west, the Director of the WRA asked the governors and other leading officials of ten western states to attend a meeting in Salt Lake City on April 7. That meeting proved to be an important turning point in the relocation program. The War Relocation Authority had several possible plans for relocation in mind, but the reaction of the assembled governors and other state officials was sharply unfavorable to most of these proposals. Some of those at the meeting refused to be responsible for the maintenance of law and order unless evacuees brought into their states were kept under constant military surveillance. And practically all were strongly opposed to any type of unsupervised relocation. Following the meeting, the only feasible plan left was the establishment of relocation centers with sufficient capacity and facilities to handle the entire evacuee population for a temporary period.

Relocation centers were never intended as concentration camps or prisons. They were established primarily as an expedient -- to provide communities where the evacuated people could live while long-range relocation plans were being developed. After the Salt Lake City meeting with the western governors, the intention of the War Relocation Authority was to receive the entire evacuee population at the relocation centers, develop individual records, and then work out a relocation program on an individual basis. However, within a few weeks after the meeting -- before the movement into relocation centers was even well under way -- a strong demand for farm labor arose, especially in the sugar beet producing areas of the West. By the middle of May, the need for workers had become so acute that the War Relocation Authority and the Western Defense Command jointly worked out a special program for recruitment of evacuees in Army assembly centers and in the few relocation centers which were then in operation. By the latter part of June, approximately 1600 evacuees from the centers were at work in sugar beet areas and other sections of the agricultural west. Before the close of the harvest season in the fall, nearly 10,000 evacuees had been recruited from the centers for seasonal work under this group leave program.

Evacuees were permitted to work only in areas where state and local officials had given written assurance that law and order would be maintained. Each group of evacuees going out was assigned to work in a specific area and the members of the group were not allowed to leave this designated area without special permission from the Western Defense Command. Even with these precautions, some of us in WRA feared that serious difficulties might develop between the evacuee workers and the people of nearby communities. Surprisingly enough, however, the results of the program were generally good from every

point of view. In nearly all cases, the evacuees were accepted as valuable workers and treated as such. Before the season ended, they had harvested enough beets to provide a year's sugar ration for nearly 10,000,000 people.

While this movement into the agricultural fields was going forward, the great bulk of the evacuated people were pouring into relocation centers. By mid-summer, four of the centers were in operation and nearly one-third of the evacuee population had been transferred to these new communities. The program was still young, but already evidence was beginning to accumulate that the relocation centers could never be developed into normal communities, in the full sense of the word. Signs of unrest were mounting and valuable skills were obviously not being put to full productive use. On the other hand, the experience in the sugar beet fields was encouraging. It showed that evacuees could make a significant contribution to the solution of the manpower problem. And so on the 20th of July, the War Relocation Authority adopted a policy making it possible for American citizen evacuees who had never lived or studied in Japan to leave the relocation centers indefinitely, after investigation, in order that they might take full-time jobs and establish residence in normal communities. Later on, toward the end of September, that policy was broadened so that any resident of a relocation center -- citizen or alien -- might apply for indefinite leave outside of the evacuated areas.

In recent weeks, there has been a great deal of public discussion about this leave program and about the adequacy of check made by the War Relocation Authority prior to the granting of leave. The impression has been created that we make practically no check at all, and the charge even has been made that we are consciously turning spies and saboteurs loose upon the Nation. I want to refute this charge with all possible emphasis. As a matter of fact, we have been bending over backwards in the precautions we have taken. The federal government has more information concerning the people in relocation centers than it has on any other group. Records on many of these people have been built up over a period of years by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of Naval Intelligence, and other investigative agencies. In addition, the War Relocation Authority has been accumulating information on this entire group ever since they entered relocation centers. In granting leave we make a very careful check of the records which have been developed for each individual at the relocation center. If there is any evidence from any source that the evacuee might endanger the national safety or interfere with the war effort, permission for indefinite leave is denied. As a further precaution, we are acquiring from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, all the information available in its files and from other intelligence agencies on all adult evacuees at the centers. The names of nearly 90 percent of the adult evacuees have now been checked through FBI and the job should be completed in the next few weeks. I should add that in the great majority of cases so far considered, there has been nothing in FBI files or elsewhere to justify denial of leave.

Besides checking the record of the evacuee himself, we also try to determine the attitude of the community where he is planning to relocate. If popular opinion seems to run strongly against the acceptance of any person of Japanese descent, the evacuee is so advised and is urged not to relocate in that particular area. We also require each evacuee going out

on indefinite leave to inform us of any change of job or change of address. And we are maintaining in our Washington office a locator file so that individual evacuees may promptly be located if the need arises. Some of you may be surprised to learn that the evacuees, as a group, are not rushing forward to take advantage of the leave procedure. In fact, our principal trouble has been in the other direction. Ever since the present leave program was adopted last September, we have been trying to convince the evacuated people that relocation in normal communities is the best course, both for themselves and for the nation as a whole. But the evacuees read the same newspapers as the rest of us and listen to the same radio programs. They hear themselves branded by a few public officials and influential citizens as a group of potential saboteurs, day after day and week after week. And so, naturally, many are reluctant to leave the centers to face a public that seems predominantly hostile.

There are people here on the Pacific Coast and elsewhere who feel that the War Relocation Authority is making a serious mistake in urging the people of Japanese descent to leave the sanctuary of relocation centers. Some of these people feel that it is not safe for the nation to have any person of Japanese descent at large. Others argue that confinement in relocation centers is necessary for protection of the evacuees themselves. I disagree strongly with both these points of view and I would like to tell you why.

First, let us take a look at the argument that all people of Japanese ancestry constitute a menace to the national security. At the present time, there are almost 35,000 people of Japanese descent outside relocation centers within the continental limits of the United States. About half of these people have left the centers only in the past few months, but some 20,000 of them lived outside the evacuated area or have never been in relocation centers. Yet in all these months of war, not one case of sabotage on the part of any person of Japanese descent has been reported from any reliable source.

Contrary to the persistent rumors of sabotage by resident Japanese at the time of Pearl Harbor, we have it from the very highest authorities that no such actions have been committed either on December 7, 1941, or at any time since. In view of that record, both in Hawaii and on the mainland, I am frankly unable to see any factual basis for assuming that every person with a Japanese face is automatically a threat to the safety of the nation.

The argument that people of Japanese descent must be kept in confinement for their own protection is remarkably similar to the justification which the Nazi regime has sometimes advanced for its treatment of the Jews. This argument is based on the assumption that the law enforcement agencies of the nation have somehow broken down and that they are no longer able to offer the protection which they provided in time of peace. Essentially, the argument is a slander against these agencies and against the basic good sense of the great majority of our people. Despite all the racial emotions that have been aroused, I refuse to believe we have proceeded so far in the direction of anarchy that we find it necessary to lock up all persons of Japanese descent in order to protect them from bodily harm.

So far I have been talking mainly about the leave program of the War Relocation Authority because that is, and has been for several months, the most important part of our total program. But we still have an important job to do in managing the relocation centers. In considering the manner in which the relocation centers are operated, it is important to keep clearly in mind the status of the evacuees. They are not living in the relocation centers as punishment for any wrong-doing, or because they are suspected of being dangerous; they are not prisoners of war; they are not internees. They are a dislocated group of people removed from their homes and their means of livelihood as a wartime emergency measure. As such they are entitled to treatment according to American standards of decency. Ever since the summer of 1942, when most of the centers were still in the early stages of construction, all sorts of unfounded rumors and inaccurate stories have been circulated about the WRA management policies. Some of these stories have been obviously fantastic -- like the one circulated in Idaho over a year ago that all evacuees lived in snug little bungalows with pink tile bathrooms. And more recently, there was the story attributed to a member of the House Committee on Un-American Activities that all evacuees are provided by the Government with five gallons of whiskey. Unfortunately, most of the stories have not been so plainly ridiculous. Although equally untrue, they have generally carried more of an appearance of plausibility and consequently have been widely accepted.

It is extremely significant, I think, that most of the stories about pampering of evacuees have come from people who have never visited a relocation center. In a number of cases, people who have actually visited a center have taken pains to make a public denial of all pampering charges. But such stories, of course, have not received as much attention as the original allegations. The same thing is true of the charges that have been made in recent weeks by investigators, and spokesmen for the House Committee on Un-American Activities. We have made a careful analysis of the more important of these charges and have found that the great majority are inaccurate or misleading and that many of the most startling ones are completely untrue. Yet the great bulk of the Americans still remember the charges and have not yet learned about the actual facts.

Perhaps the most widely criticized aspect of relocation center administration is the policy under which evacuees are being fed. Food is a delicate topic these days and it's not surprising that people should be aroused when they hear the evacuees are enjoying a better diet than the average civilian family. If these stories were true, I will readily concede that there would be grounds for the most intense kind of public resentment. But the stories are not true and I believe that all of you sitting here today would be convinced of their falsity if you could eat just one meal in a relocation center. The food served at the centers is nourishing, but could not be called luxurious by any conceivable American standard. The cost of feeding over the past several months has ranged from 34 to 42 cents per person per day. And it is the established policy of the Authority that this cost shall not exceed 45 cents per day in any case. All rationing restrictions applicable to the civilian population are strictly followed. Two meatless days are observed at each center every week. And in areas where local milk supplies are short, milk is provided only to small children, nursing or expectant mothers, and special dietary cases.

Ever since the relocation centers were first established, our policy has been to produce as much food as possible on the project lands. We expect a greatly increased production of vegetables, meats, dairy products, and poultry products during the current year, probably up to one-third of the total food requirements of the centers.

The housing at relocation centers is certainly no more than adequate by any ordinary standards. Evacuee residents live in plain barracks of frame construction which are partitioned off into family-size apartments. A family of six or seven people will ordinarily occupy a room about 20 by 25 feet. In the barracks there is no running water, no cooking facilities, and no baths or toilets. However, each block of 12 or 14 barracks -- accommodating between 250 and 300 people -- is provided with a messhall and a bath and laundry building.

Education is provided for the evacuee children through the high school level. At all centers, we have developed our school curriculum and selected our teachers in conformity with the standards of the state where the center is located.

All evacuees at relocation centers have been provided with medical care and hospitalization when needed and these services are supplied largely by evacuee doctors and nurses.

In operating the centers, we have always made maximum use of evacuee manpower. Evacuees are employed in clerical and stenographic positions, on construction activities and land development work, in food production, and -- to some extent -- in manufacturing. Most of those who work are paid at the rate of \$16 per month; apprentices and others requiring close supervision receive \$12, while professional workers, such as doctors, are paid \$19. In addition, each evacuee working at the center receives small clothing allowances for himself and his dependents. These allowances range from \$2 a month for small children in the southerly centers to \$3.75 for adults in centers where the winters are severe. At the present time, about 30 percent of the able-bodied evacuees at the centers are engaged in some line of work.

The policy of the War Relocation Authority provides that evacuees at all centers are to have an active voice in the management of their own affairs, but maintenance of law and order within the center is a responsibility of the WRA project director. To assist him in this function, the project director has a small staff of non-Japanese internal security officers and a sizeable crew of evacuee policement. The exterior boundaries of each project area are guarded by a detachment of military police who are available for service within the center in cases of emergency.

I won't go into further detail on the conditions that prevail in the relocation centers. But I believe I have said enough to indicate that life in the centers is not exactly a bed of roses. When the evacuees first arrived at each of the centers last summer and fall, construction work was still in progress and it continued at most places until well after the arrival of the last evacuee contingent. Under the circumstances, a great amount of turmoil and confusion was inevitable. Evacuee families from all sections of the Pacific Coast and all walks of life suddenly found themselves

crowded together in a strange new environment. They found themselves cut off from all normal intercourse with the larger American community and deprived of all ordinary economic opportunities. Practically all the social controls that ordinarily make for family and community solidarity were thrown out of gear and the problem of juvenile delinquency began to assume serious proportions.

It is significant, I think, that we have had our most serious problems at the four oldest centers. These centers were all established during the spring and early summer of 1942 before the War Relocation Authority had really worked out many of its most fundamental policies. It must be remembered that we were operating in an almost entirely new field of governmental action virtually without precedents or guideposts. Under the circumstances, some confusion of administration was inevitable. At the Poston Center in Western Arizona, last November, the residents of one of the three communities there staged a strike and protest meeting that lasted the better part of a week. However, the trouble was settled peaceably without any violence or any destruction of government property despite all rumors and reports to the contrary. At Manzanar, we had a more serious disturbance which happened to occur just before the anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack. In this case, the military police were called in to restore order. And in the fracas, two evacuees were killed and ten others wounded.

Some of the accounts gave the impression that both of these incidents were manifestations of pro-Axis feeling on the part of the evacuees. And the Manzanar incident has also been described as a celebration of the Pearl Harbor Anniversary. These explanations are dramatic, exciting, and easy to accept. But they do not square with the facts. Actually, both of the incidents were extremely complicated in their origin.

More than anything else, they were the culmination of community anxieties and resentments that had been building up over a period of months. Evacuees at both of these centers had been through the experiences I have just mentioned. Many of them -- citizen and alien alike -- had suffered substantial losses of property at the time of the evacuation. Most of them looked forward to the future with misgiving and uncertainty. A few had even reached the point of abandoning all hope that they would ever make a successful adjustment to life in the United States. In such a highly charged atmosphere people were easy prey for the agitators and the slightest spark of trouble was bound to cause an explosion. And in time the spark was introduced.

Following the Manzanar incident, we took steps to strengthen our internal security system at the centers and established a special isolation center for persistent and incorrigible troublemakers. This center was temporarily established in January at an abandoned CCC Camp near Moab, Utah, and is now located on the grounds of an Indian Service boarding school at Leupp, Arizona. At the present time about 70 evacuees -- all American citizens -- are being quartered at this center. Alien evacuees who incite trouble at the relocation centers are certified to the Department of Justice and transferred to internment camps.

Now let me return to the subject of clearing evacuees for leave. It has taken time to develop individual records on all the evacuees at the centers, but as we are now in a position where we can make a reasonable determination of loyalties on every adult individual. The task of gathering these records was started several months ago is now just about completed. On January 28 of this year, the Secretary of War announced the formation of a special combat unit in the United States Army to be composed entirely of American citizens of Japanese descent. During February and early March a recruitment program was carried out by the Army in the Hawaiian Islands and among Japanese-Americans on the mainland both in and out of relocation centers. I might add parenthetically that nearly 1200 young men of Japanese ancestry at the centers volunteered from behind barbed wire and the greater part of them are now in training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. But the main point is that while this recruitment was going on, the War Relocation Authority, with Army collaboration, carried out a vast registration program involving all evacuees at the centers 17 years of age or over. The purpose of the registration was to acquire information on the evacuees that could be used in connection with the granting of leave. Each adult evacuee was required to fill out a form that would provide extensive data on his background, attitudes, and organizational affiliations. One question on that form that has come in for widespread public attention is the so-called "loyalty question", No. 28. At first, through an oversight, all evacuees -- both citizens and aliens -- were asked to swear allegiance to the United States and forswear obedience to any foreign power, including the Emperor of Japan. After the forms had been printed and distributed, it was realized that since alien Japanese are not eligible for naturalization, they could not answer this question in the affirmative without becoming "men without a country". So the question was changed for aliens in such a way that they were asked to swear that they would abide by the laws of the United States and would not interfere with the war effort. But throughout the entire registration, citizen evacuees were asked to make a definite declaration of loyalty.

Partially because of the confusion in the wording of question 28 for aliens, a great many premature and inaccurate reports have been circulated about the number of evacuees who failed to answer "yes" on this question. So many varying percentages have been tossed around publicly that I find it hard to keep up with them myself. But here are the facts. 88 percent of those who registered answered "yes" to question 28 without qualification. 74 percent of the citizen males who registered answered "yes" as did 85 percent of the citizen females who registered, and 97 percent of the aliens who registered. Approximately 11 percent answered "no" or qualified their answers and a little over one percent refused to answer this particular question. In addition, there were about 3,000 evacuees at the centers who failed to register. If all evacuees were as untrustworthy as they have frequently been depicted, we most certainly would not have had a single negative answer to question 28.

Using these same questionnaires as basic information, we are now about to begin a program of segregation. We are going to separate these evacuees who have indicated -- either by expressed statement or by persistent action -- that their loyalty lies with Japan in the current hostilities and we are going to maintain them in a center by themselves. The first

group to be segregated will be those who have requested repatriation or expatriation to Japan and who have not withdrawn their applications prior to July 1, 1943. These people will be segregated as a group rather than on an individual basis. All others to be segregated, however, will be given individual hearings. Aside from the repatriate-expatriate group, candidates for segregation will be drawn chiefly from those who have unfavorable records with intelligence agencies and those who are denied leave clearance by the War Relocation Authority because of other information indicating loyalty to Japan. Tule Lake in northern California has been selected as the segregation center. Present residents of Tule Lake who are eligible for indefinite leave will be given a choice of relocating immediately or of transferring to another center. Persons at the other centers who are designated for segregation will be transferred to Tule Lake. Actual movements will begin as soon as preliminary arrangements are completed and transportation becomes available -- probably soon after September 1.

The end product of this segregation program will be one center composed entirely of evacuees who have indicated in effect that they want to be Japanese. They will receive fair, decent treatment; they will be adequately guarded, and will not be generally eligible for leave. Then there will be nine other centers composed entirely of evacuees whose records and statements indicate that they want to be Americans -- and all of these people will be eligible for leave from the centers outside of designated military areas.

A great deal has been said, especially in recent weeks, regarding the extent of Americanization that has taken place among the citizens of Japanese descent who were born and raised in this country. My own experience with these people over the past 14 months, together with all the information I have been able to obtain from authoritative sources, convinces me that the great bulk of the Nisei or second-generation group are wholeheartedly American in all their fundamental attitudes and loyalties. Approximately 72 percent of them have never even visited Japan and only about 15 percent have ever studied there for any extended period. The overwhelming majority of these youngsters have been brought up in this country, have attended American public schools, and have absorbed Americanism almost as naturally as they breathe.

To claim otherwise is equivalent to asserting that American institutions exercise a less potent influence over the youthful mind than the transplanted institutions of the Orient. I deny that assertion. I have faith in the strength of American institutions and I believe that few human minds can be exposed to them during the formative years without absorbing the rich heritage of American life. The most eloquent testimony of this is being provided almost every day at relocation centers -- in the community newspapers, in the classrooms, and in activities of such thoroughly American organizations as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, YWCA and National Red Cross. Residents of the relocation center have given evidence in many ways that they wish to become part of the fibre of this country. They have bought thousands of dollars worth of war bonds and stamps. They have contributed to the Red Cross -- at many centers well in excess of their quotas. They have volunteered for service in the Army. And large numbers have expressed an eagerness to play an active part in war work.

Americanism is stressed at all centers in the schools, in adult education courses, in discussion forums, and in almost every aspect of community activities. However, Americanization can never be wholly effective within the confines of relocation centers. We have felt from the beginning that the only effective way to carry on the Americanization process among the evacuees would be to restore those with good records to normal American communities at the earliest possible date. That is one of the basic reasons why we have developed a leave program and why we are now concentrating our energies mainly on relocation outside the centers.

Ever since the time of the evacuation, we in WRA have been acutely conscious of the grave implications of our program. We have been aware that our progress is being watched by the Japanese government and that it might provide a pattern for the treatment of American nationals -- both soldiers and civilians -- in Japanese hands. We have also born in mind the reactions in other parts of the Orient -- in China, India, and other countries whose collaboration we need in the fight against the Tokyo end of the Axis.

We recognize that the WRA program is a proper subject for public inquiry. We welcome investigation by committees of the Congress or any other group. We welcome constructive criticism of the manner in which we are discharging our responsibility. We heartily endorse the fundamental American right of a healthy difference of opinion. But, in view of the serious issues at stake, we do ask that investigations of our program be conducted in a truly fact-finding spirit and that criticism of our administrative actions be based on truth rather than on rumor or manufactured allegations.

In carrying the program forward, we have also kept constantly in mind a number of basic assumptions. In the first place, we have assumed that the foremost task before the American people is to win the war and we have felt that this means concentrating our energies on fighting the enemy rather than fighting among ourselves. Secondly, we have assumed that the great majority of the people of Japanese ancestry now in this country will remain here after the war and continue to be good citizens or law-abiding aliens. Thirdly, we believe that it is possible to distinguish between the loyal and the disloyal people of Japanese ancestry to a degree that will safeguard the national security. Techniques for determining loyalty, which have been employed by the intelligence agencies over a period of years, have amply demonstrated their effectiveness, and we feel that these same techniques can be used in determining eligibility for leave. Finally, we believe that loyalty grows and sustains itself only when it is given a chance. It cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and discrimination.

If these assumptions are accepted, it becomes extremely difficult to justify the wholesale detention of all persons of Japanese descent in relocation centers. In fact, I fail to see how such an action could possibly be squared with the basic principles on which our country has been developed and which we are now fighting to defend. But there are many other -- more immediately practical -- reasons why we decided many months ago that a large leave program was the only logical step.

We realized that the skills and energies of the evacuees could never be put to full use in the relocation centers; that manpower was going to waste at a time when the nation needed every ounce of manpower.

We are aware, too, that operating the relocation centers is draining money from the taxpayers and from the war effort. We hope that outside relocation will reduce the population of the centers so some of them can be closed and turned over to the Army for whatever use they can make of them. Ideally, I hope all the people who are not segregated can be relocated -- and we can work ourselves out of a job before the close of the war,

Another reason for adopting the leave program lies in the constitutional and legal principles involved. Lawyers generally are doubtful of the legality of detaining American citizens, against whom no charge has been placed. In fact, a Federal district court in California recently rendered a decision denying an evacuee's petition for the writ of habeas corpus only because WRA has established a leave program and the evacuee had failed to apply for indefinite leave.

There is one important point about the leave program which I believe is being overlooked in such of the discussion that has taken place here on the Pacific Coast. I'm thinking about the Little Tokyos and the concentrations of people of Japanese ancestry which existed before evacuation. I have found no one who thought that these concentrations of population were desirable even in peacetime, let alone in time of war. Most of the people who comprised them are now in the relocation centers, and some people are insisting that they be kept there for the duration. Suppose that were to be done. In that case, what will happen when the war is over? One alternative that has been suggested by some is to send all of them to Japan, regardless of citizenship and regardless of loyalty. I cannot conceive of either the American conscience or the Constitution permitting such an act. The thing which most likely would happen would be for the evacuated people to return to the place they called home -- and the Little Tokyos would probably spring up again, with all their undesirable features.

But if the leave program is successful, a large number of the evacuees will re-establish themselves in other parts of the country, where they can be absorbed readily. It is hoped that the bulk of the relocated people will stay where they strike root. It is hard to understand why residents or officials of California or other west coast states would oppose rather than support a program of relocation and dispersion which provides the only sensible answer to one of the most pressing social problems which the West Coast and the Nation has faced.

To my mind, the most serious aspect of the whole relocation program is the fact that we are dealing exclusively with a racial minority. The Nazis of Germany and the warlords of Tokyo have made it clear that they consider themselves the master races of the earth and regard all other peoples as inferior. This is a doctrine which most of us instinctively detest -- a doctrine that runs counter to all our cherished traditions and principles. Yet there are mounting signs that a similar attitude is gaining ground in this country.

In recent weeks I have seen resolutions passed by organizations all over California and other states reflecting the same type of racial thinking that prevails in Tokyo and Berlin. I realize, of course, that war always breeds strong emotions. And this war has been especially trying on all of us. The scope of the combat, the magnitude of the issues at stake, and the

stern necessity for constant unstinting effort have tried our tempers, frayed our nerves, and warped our judgments. But this is all the more reason why we should exercise restraint and hold fast to the principles we have always cherished. Now, more than ever before, the United States is being regarded from all quarters of the globe as an outstanding example of democracy in action. If we give in to racial feeling, if we practice the theories of the Nazis and the militarists, we are weakening our position on every battle front in the world. If we repress or persecute tens of thousands of our own citizens, solely on the grounds of race, the other Nations of the world may well ask whether we have a moral right to assume a leading role at the peace table, or to ask for cooperation in waging the war.

But despite all resolutions that have been passed, despite all the intemperate statements by some public officials, and despite the strongly worded mail that has been coming in to my desk in recent weeks, I still have confidence in the basic good sense of the American people. I believe that much of current agitation is based on misinformation rather than fundamental conviction. And I feel sure that once the facts are known, the conscience of America will reassert itself. Our treatment of the people of Japanese descent in our midst will certainly go down as one of the most significant chapters in the history of the current war. That chapter can be a shameful blot on our national record or it can be to our everlasting credit. In the last analysis -- the choice is really up to the American people.