

THE JAPANESE IN OUR MIDST

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BACKGROUND OF THE SITUATION

There are in the United States about 132,000 Japanese and those of Japanese ancestry. The coastal area from which the Japanese are being evacuated includes more than one-half of California, about two-thirds of Washington, two-fifths of Oregon, the southern two-fifths of Arizona, and most of the leading cities of the four states. The census of 1940 reported 112,353 Japanese in California, Oregon, and Washington--Practically all of them living in the coastal areas. Two-thirds of these were American citizens by birth. The Japanese did not start coming to the United States in considerable numbers until 1900. Some of the first to arrive in this country found their way to Colorado to work in the beet fields, while others made a real contribution to the building of the railroads. The Theodore Roosevelt administration in 1907, by its famous "Gentleman's Agreement" with the Japanese government, secured the voluntary limitation of Japanese immigrants, restriction it to officials, tourists, business and professional men, students, and those already here together with their families. The Immigration Law of 1924 provided no quotas for races ineligible to naturalization. Our laws permit naturalization of aliens of foreign nativity and Negroes of African nativity, but do not permit those of Filipino, Chinese, Japanese or Polynesian nativity to become citizens. This is an answer to the question----why don't they go back to Japan if they are not willing to become citizens of United States. According to the 1930 census there are 75 Negroes for every 1,000 white Americans and 1 of Japanese extraction for every 1,000 white Americans.

ISSEI, NISEI, KIBEI,

These are three Japanese words meaning "first generation", "second generation" and "second generation with some part of their education in Japan." The second generation--born in this country are citizens. You will hear the second word frequently, the other two not so often, but all three are important as indicating some of the reasons why this question of our Japanese residents is more complicated than that of either German or Italian residents.

EVACUATION ORDERS

On February 19, 1942, the President of the United States authorized the Secretary of War to prescribe military area

from which any or all persons may be excluded and with respect to which the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to what ever restrictions the Secretary of War of the appropriate military commander may impose in his discretion. This order applied to any Japanese, German, or Italian aliens, and Americans of Japanese ancestry.

Thousands of Japanese were on the move to inland centers the first date of evacuation having passed, while thousands were preparing to move out by February 24, the final date of removal. In the words of Attorney General Francis Biddle, "Intense times such as these a strange psychology grips us. We are oppressed and fearful and apprehensive. If we cannot get the immediate cause, we are likely to vent our dammed-up energy on a scapegoat. That sort of psychology is the very essence of totalitarianism. On the other hand, civil liberties are the essence of the democracy we are pledged to protect."

THE JAPANESE-AMERICAN GROUP

Popular rumor has spread it that the American Japanese are tricky and unreliable. A wise woman having much experience either the white or yellow races said: "There is no such thing as racial monopoly on dishonesty of honesty, and human nature is remarkably alike on this score in every land."

As to criminality, a study can be quoted which shows that in the first 27 years of this century, of over two million arrests for all causes in California, the criminal record of the Japanese was only about half as high as for the others in the state.

The children of these immigrants, being American born, are American citizens, entitled to all the privileges of the Bill of Rights. Their parents were permitted to come here under constitutional law. These children are becoming of age, with most of them now in their twenties. As one lad put it, "We are Americans with a racial mask we cannot take off. Because we look like Japanese, people treat us that way."

WHAT ABOUT LOYALTY

Mr. Robert O'Brien, assistant dean of the School of Arts and Science of the University of Washington, writes:

"At the University of Washington we have over 300 Japanese American students enrolled, and the University employs some twenty Nisei as teachers, laboratory assistants, and teaching fellows. Students of Japanese ancestry hold offices in students organizations and represent the University on athletic and non-athletic competition.

"This absorbing in campus life has welded close ties between students of Japanese parentage and other under-graduates. So assimilated are many of the campus Nisei that they refuse

to celebrate the Japanese victories over China and some even joined the boycott against shipping war supplies to Japan two years ago.....

"Objective standards for measuring loyalty are always difficult to set up, but a number of overt reactions of the Nisei on the campus can be related. As the official in charge of recommending draft deferment in the College of Arts and Science, I have interviewed hundreds of men regarding selective service. Last spring (before Pearl Harbor) I noticed that practically no American of Japanese ancestry had asked for deferment of "special" jobs. After the treacherous attack on Hawaii, over a dozen Nisei called in my office to find out how to volunteer to fight for the United States. Of the recent members of the Japanese Students Club, I checked eighty-three who have volunteered or are serving under Selective Service in the American Army. Other evidences of loyalty on the part of the Nisei have been their sacrificial support of defense bond drives, and the fact that one girl in five at the University is in a Red Cross First Aid Class.

Reports of sabotage by Japanese residents in Honolulu on December 7th. were widely circulated. Although these reports were officially denied by the chief of police, the president of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce and the chairman of the Citizens Council of the city in cables to the Tolson Committee on March 14, certain politicians seized the opportunity of using them to turn the Japanese question into a politician football.

RESETTLEMENT

At the present time the Japanese who have come into Denver and Colorado have voluntarily evacuated from the Pacific Coast. Prior to evacuation orders, the Denver Japanese population was approximately 250, and the state 3,000. At the present time it is estimated that both groups have at least doubled their numbers with Adams County, Denver County, and Otero County, and Weld County leading. You will note that this concentration of Japanese parallels the Spanish-speaking population groups, and the largest numbers of both are in the irrigated areas.

SHALL WE APE HITLER?

Often this question is raised: "Why do these Japanese-Americans have to leave the coast?" There are a few defense areas they have had to leave because of military necessity. The other areas they are having to leave because of the pressure of small active political and economic groups. These groups have agitated sufficient hysteria to have forced the military to act in order for the Japanese to be safe. Two leading religious authorities studying the situation on the coast gave this conclusion: "Military necessity has played only a small part in the problem. Basic in this problem are the political advantages which those in the gubernatorial campaign on the coast can play to their own advantage." When one considers that a small political minority and economic group a few

years ago made these "one in a thousand" to represent a yellow peril, the repetition of this same condition in was time is a simple thing to create. The real prejudice in our own State will come from three groups: from those directly cimoeting with the Oriental economically: from those destined to gain politically from the issue; to an extent from some newspapers; and to misguided people who commit inflammatory acts and words. The stoning of the windows of the Japanese M. E. Church of Denver, the cartoon which appeared in a Denver paper recently inciting public opinion against acceptance of Japanese-Americans in residential areas, the alignment of some with irons in the political fire against the rights of the Japanese-American go up---these are part of the picture.

THE PROBLEMS THESE PPEOPLE ARE FACING

(1) HOUSING. Many of the evacuees attempted to rent or buy houses in various parts of Denver and other communities in the State, and due to pressure from the neighbors and real setate groups, were forced to move. In some cases the reason given was that deeds of property in certain areas carried Oriental exclusion clauses.

(2) EMPLOYMENT. From a record card kept on the young between the age of 16 and 25, particularly those living in and around Denver, it was discovered that approximately three-fourths of the group have finished High School, and many are college graduates. In addition a score of others have attended beauty schools and trade schools of all kinds. At present they are in need of finding jobs commensurate with their training and experience. Many are discouraged by the treatment received at employment bureaus, and by employers when applying for jobs. It is not uncimmon to hear such statement as: "We are 100% Americans, and wouldn't think of hiring a Japanese-American."

(3) DISCRIMINATION. Probably the most important problem is that of discrimation. It crops up in regard to housing and employment, and one of the social agencies in Denver has had some calls regarding their policy to employ Japanese-Americans. People feel that this is un-American and a dangerous thing to do. However, individuals with this viewpoint represent a very small minority of the population, and on the whole this agency has been commended for its policy by many people. We all hear such things as the following:

(a) All the Japanese evacuees are dangerous and should not be employed because they are noly sending their money back to Japan. (See if you can figure out some way of getting mail to Japan at the present time!)

(b) All Japanese carry knives and they all have short wave radios and are in direct communication with Japan.

(c) Japanese-Americans should not be hired in restaurants because they will poison the customer's food.

May we all become committee of one pledging ourselves not to repeat rumors and to have the courage to challenge such remarks when had

remarks when made. Ask people to prove such statements as the one listed above.

It is important at this time to state there are no Japanese on the public relief rolls in Denver or the State of Colorado, and only a small percentage have ever been on relief of WPA rolls, so we do not need to feel they will become a public charge.

HAS RELIGION A STAKE?

Historically, all religions have taught that behind the mask which we place upon people is the universal brotherhood of man. The churches have a duty to Japanese-Americans, and the various churches on the coast have done much to help. These Japanese-Americans are well disposed to follow the teachings of Christianity and to assume their citizenship responsibilities. We must start practicing the gospel we have preached. We must start moulding public opinion and cease lip service. There are one-half million or more in this State to whom politicians will listen if the church decides to become vocal and do something. If the church does not, it will deserve the benediction which those less cognizant of its creed of brotherhood would be glad to pronounce over it.

The Denver Council of Churches and the Colorado Council of Churches the Denver Young Women's Christian Association and other organizations have committees working on this problem. Several committees have been appointed and many clergymen and laymen have shown a profound concern over the welfare of evacuees. Few instances have been reported of animosity by church groups to this problem. Notable is the case of a small church in the state which excluded evacuees from membership. What is necessary is the definite concerted action of all groups.

"The issue must be faced. Democracy will go down first of all on the rocks of racial prejudice and discrimination. We cannot wait until the war is over. For one of the fundamental issues in this world-wide war is that of race equality or inequality. We see it in Europe the Nazi emphasis on the superior race. We see it in Asia, in Japan, in China, in India. We cannot wait--the crisis is upon us. It is upon our world--whether the white people of the earth who themselves are a minority are willing to know it or not. Will it be again a question of "too little democracy on our part---and too late?"

"We must move swiftly and at once. We must see to it that all Americans shall have equal economic opportunity and that colored people in this democracy shall not suffer insult because of their color...Is democracy right or is it wrong? If it is right, then let us dare to make it true."

Can you begin with yourself, asking such questions as "How do I feel about the Japanese, the Negro, the Spanish-speaking?" "Do I feel they should have equal opportunities, and am I willing that they should work with me, live in my neighborhood, and go to my church?"

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

1. Use speakers and written material as aids to getting essential fact of the situation before groups in your church.
2. Work with committees which will meet with the civic leader, newspaper editors, and political leaders, in an effort to secure their aid in creating a more enlightened public opinion.
3. Encourage political leaders who have taken a favorable stand on this question and write your Congressmen to oppose legislation taking away the Citizenship rights of American-born Japanese.
4. Assist in meeting the housing and employment problems. The cooperation of realtors, renters, employer groups, and welfare agencies, should be sought.
5. Cooperate in the relocation efforts. If further relocation is permitted from the coastal areas, it will be through Federal approval. This will mean that new evacuees, in addition to those already in our midst, will need our help. It is suggested that you keep in touch with groups within the state working on these problems.

BY COLORADO COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
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