

Report on Tule Lake Disorders

Dec. 6, 1943
Gronada, Colo.

Evacuees who have arrived in Amache from Tule Lake have been able to present a fairly objective analysis of the situation at Tule Lake. Several well-trained social scientists who left Tule Lake after the disorder occurred stressed some factors which were apparently overlooked or stressed very lightly in the reports received here from or through other channels. Accordingly we have prepared an analysis of the situation from the perspective of this Center.

Since the time of registration in February and March, there has been no representative government at Tule Lake through which problems, grievances, complaints, and suggestions might be taken up with the WRA administration at the Project. As a result, several strong sources of dissatisfaction have operated to provide an accumulating feeling of resentment, frustration, and bitterness on the part of the evacuees. One of the most important of these was the question of food. The quality and quantity of food served at Tule Lake to evacuees is described as highly unsatisfactory. One of the most aggravating aspects of this food subject is the general understanding (or widely spread rumor) among the residents at Tule Lake that one or two large shipments of produce from the Tule Lake farm were sent to Klamath Falls, Oregon, to a private produce merchant or shipper, who paid for the goods, the proceeds being divided between one to the Caucasian packing shed superintendent and an evacuee who was working in cahoots with him. This report or "general information" was never refuted, so far as we can learn here, nor disproved to the satisfaction of the inhabitants. Other aggravations mentioned most prominently include the uncompromisingly hostile attitude of the chief medical officer, Dr. Pedicord, his contempt of evacuees and lack of consideration of their needs, and his almost continuous abuse of the medicinal alcohol supplied to the hospital. Still other complaints accumulated during the weeks following registration. The only relief in the long sequence was the activities of the evacuee committee to expedite segregation. Even this committee failed to receive administrative cooperation to the extent that it should have.

With this background of resentment, the process of segregation removed from the community most of the tried and tested constructive leaders. Many people came in to the community from the nine other centers, but who among them were adequate to fulfill the tasks of leadership was a question which could only be decided by trial. In the face of the situation which already existed at Tule Lake, such trials took the form of opportunistic efforts to secure redress of specific grievances. The leader who could gather sufficient strength, plausibility, and effectiveness to present requests to the administration, and have the requests honored and acted upon by the administration would obviously have proved his value as a leader to the community in a tangible way. The more rapidly the "bacon" was brought home, the more certainly would popular acclaim and recognition occur, and the less probable it would be that some other leader would get results first--and acceptance as a leader.

This situation put a premium on rapid, coercive action, and placed a heavy handicap upon efforts and really constructive leadership, although some attempts in that direction continued to be made. The slow growth of a following, based upon careful planning, demonstrated willingness to cooperate with the administration, and thereafter amicable work with administrative leaders to secure gradual improvements and redress of grievances, was practically impossible. Too many leaders anxious to secure a following by more rapid means, and to assure themselves a place in the sun by such action, made it impossible for constructive leaders to secure the calmness, the unemotional consideration of problems and practicable way and means of solving them necessary to make any real headway toward social stabilization and improvement of community relationships. Instead the situation went from bad to worse.

Formation of pressure groups, presentation of demands, and organization of popular "demonstrations" in support of such demands, were the obvious techniques open to opportunistic leadership. Father Kai, the Buddhist priest, was one of the most effective, but there were several dozen such would-be leaders striving

to achieve some sort of recognition, and vying with each other in securing Concessions from the Administration. These leaders, or at least several of them, decided to take advantage of the presence of Mr. Myer and Mr. Cozzens on the project to present their demands to them and to the Project Director, Mr. Best, in the presence of a large number of people who could be represented as, or thought to be, pressing for concurrence with the demands presented. Accordingly, they notified each mess hall that Mr. Myer would address the people of the center at 1 o'clock on the afternoon of Nov. 2, over a loud speaker system, and that those who were interested would go to the administration areas to hear Mr. Myer. The rest of the occurrences which took place have been well recounted in the press release of Nov. 14 (which, according to reactions of local newspapermen and publicists, was both too late and too long), and in the much better release given to center papers, one version of which occurred in the Granada Pioneer of Nov. 17. The press reports based on the press conference arranged by the San Francisco office of WRA were considerably distorted—that of the Hearst press with evident design and intent to create a different impression from the true picture. For instance, Mr. Grays was asked whether there was a crowd around the administration buildings, or some such detail. He replied "Yes, there was." The Hearst press reported that he had verified in every detail the reports published in the Hearst papers of Nov. 3, telling of the crowd around the administration buildings, the fact that the crowd carried knives, clubs and weapons (which Mr. Grays had specifically denied in reply to another question), and that the administrative officials were held prisoner (which he had also denied, and pointed out that an administrative official, really two, left the administration area and returned to it without being molested), that the administration building was overrun with evacuees (which he also denied, since the only evacuees in the building were the committee of 17 and the three or four who set up the loud speaker system). The Hearst press also omitted his statement that he worked all through the afternoon doing his regular work, and that most of the

other administrative officials did the same. Publicists here feel that a short, factual statement issued as soon as the incident occurred, and stating its essential nature and extent would have been far more effective in avoiding an unfavorable press report than the tactic used of trying to play down and hush up the whole matter.

One more feature of the incident should be treated. The evacuees from Tule Lake who have been contacted here are unanimous in saying that Dr. Pedicord deserved the beating he got, and much more. They say that he was utterly indifferent to the real needs of the evacuee patients, that he refused to requisition needed supplies—supplies urgently needed for the treatment of critically ill patients, that he was inconsiderate in his treatment of patients, that he and one of his chief assistants consumed most of the medicinal alcohol which was sent to the hospital for the use of the patients, and that he was unfit to be a medical officer—let alone a chief medical officer—anywhere. The beating occurred, according to the report current here, when a committee of evacuees went to talk with him concerning his refusal to treat or permit to be treated the farm workers who had been injured by the overturning of the farm truck. He had refused them admittance, saying that he wasn't going to help any g—d—saboteurs. The committee tried to point out that even if they had been saboteurs he had a duty to perform in accordance with medical ethics, and that none of them injured had engaged in violence which could have injured anyone physically, not even themselves, and that the accidental overturn of the truck was certainly not the responsibility of the passengers riding in it who were injured and in need of treatment. During the discussion, Dr. Pedicord made a pass at two of the committee, and the fight was on.

Widely current beliefs in Tule Lake

!!

!

One of the ugliest aspects of this last affair is the story that Dr. Pedicord is telling—at least, the one he told the two persons here while the train on which he was riding to Arkansas stopped here to unload 51 passenger on Nov. 14. He told them that he gave a good account of himself, and that the Internal Security staff then went to work on the evacuee committee members with baseball bats and gave them

the third degree, all of the three or four members conducting the third degree concentrating on beating the ringleader together. If he goes around spreading that story, as he undoubtedly has, it will ultimately reach the ears of the Japanese Government, and be used by it to justify or excuse the inhumane treatment which some Americans in Japan will doubtless suffer. We know that they will go ahead with the inhumane treatment even without the justification, but if this story can be used to defend such actions, it will render much less effective our protests against such treatment prisoners and internees, both at the peace table and before the bar of public opinion throughout the world, particularly in the Far East.

We hope that this report will afford an interesting and infrative^{own} sidelight on the Tule Lake affair.

John A. Rademaker and Staff

Community Analysis Section