

RECREATIONAL ORGANIZATION

I Introduction

Much has been said on the definition of recreation and its distinction from education, art, and social activities. There is no need to define the term for the purpose of this chapter, for the WRA administration has determined the area of recreational activities by its widely circumscribed organization of the recreational department, better known in the administration as the community activities department. However, there is need to characterize the social psychological function of recreation for such characterization offers understanding of the place recreation has in the lives of evacuees.

For the individual personality recreation is generally not a means to an end, as is presumably the case with economic or educational activities, but the activity in recreation tends to be an end in itself. The case is well illustrated in the play of infants and the games of children where an educator or a social philosopher might conceivably find some hidden significance in the relationship of play to children's maturation, but for the child as a growing biological and psychological organism, there is probably nothing more than a release of energy in pleasurable activity. On the other hand, "work" as it is generally conceived is a means, usually a toilsome means, of gaining later satisfaction of fundamental needs. "Study" likewise is generally conceived as a means of gaining personal satisfactions, which, at the moment, are still in the distant future. In these instances, there is suspension of the consummatory response during the time the means of gaining the



anticipated end are performed. To the degree that recreational activity is identified with a health program, a commercial enterprise, or with courtship, the activity loses the character of recreation for the person who so identifies it. By contrast, recreation has a close affinity to expressive religious behavior, mob action, or personal expressions of anger, for in all these there is a release of tensions which probably results in cathartic effects, but recreation has the further quality that it does not leave as disturbing after effects as in the analogous instances mentioned.

Considering the history of Japanese on the Pacific Coast since the outbreak of war with Japan, it is needless to state that the psychological state of these people may be described as disturbed, disorganized, frustrated and without adequate means of happy expression. Knowing this history, one may readily understand the meaning of the Issei who declared, "There is nothing but emptiness within me now,"<sup>1</sup> a general attitude which is expressed in various ways by these people though they all mean essentially the same thing.

Among the Japanese immigrants there has always existed a considerable emphasis on the habits of industry and perseverance at hard work, and men among them thought nothing of putting in ten to fifteen hours a day on their farms, at their grocery stores and market stalls, or at any enterprise that would provide them an income for livelihood and possibly for wealth. Most of these people originally came as "birds of passage" intent upon saving



enough to return to Japan where they might establish themselves at a higher status than when they left; but as the years wore on, families were established, and the making of a "pot-o'-gold" quickly grew dimmer. They remained here but still concentrated much of their energy upon work. Whatever these people had for their life goals, whether of family status, wealth, education for the children, or of a stimulated hope of returning to Japan, their ambition was closely tied into their work for they expended much of their time and energy at their occupation and had relatively little time to expand their experience in other directions. Not only was this true of the male immigrants, but women, too, often worked closely side by side with their husbands or spent much time at the menial tasks about the home. They were, of course, not entirely without their leisure time pleasures. These activities characteristically fell within the pattern of social calls (usually quite formal), drinking parties among the men, goh or shogi games, organizing and participating in kenjinkais (prefectural groups), Japanese Association, business associations (which were frequently as social as they were commercial in their aim), and churches, and reading books and newspapers in the Japanese language. For the rest, they waited for special events such as shibais (Japanese plays and entertainment), Japanese movies, sumo and judo tournaments, and holidays such as New Year's Day. But by and large, work and organizing activity within their own group took up most of their time.

Pre-war  
cultural  
activities

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The breakdown of these normal routines of life were bound to create the feeling of the "emptiness of life" described in an earlier paragraph. Here in the Tule Lake Project the Issei, especially the men, find themselves without reading material in Japanese, do not



have the incentives for work which they had on the outside, have none of the organizations like the kenjinkai, business associations, Japanese Association, and their old church, with which they busied themselves, and even have lost their normal circle of friends as one of the misfortunes of relocation. One may even conjecture as to the difference which the absence of osake (rice wine) makes in the lives of these men, for it was <sup>a</sup>normal complement to all festivities and parties, and a hospitable gesture wherever drinking men gathered in homes. One suspects that a good part of the hostility against any available scapegoat evinced by the Issei in the relocation situation arises from their feelings of frustration created by these abnormal circumstances of life.

Issei women, on the other hand, show little of this type of aggressiveness, except as an echo to their husband's expressions. Perhaps this is in part due to the traditional docility and reservation of Issei women, but it is undoubtedly equally explainable by the smaller disturbance created in their life routine by the evacuation. The women still are the keepers of the home, and mothers to children, but beyond this, there have been developed a range of activities for the women which constantly keep them occupied. To be sure, there are those women, principally those who came from the farms, whose habit it was to work long hours of the day out in the field, or among shopkeepers' wives, at the stores, but they too are entering into the round of activities which keep women busy from morning to night. There are the sewing classes, crocheting and knitting circles, handicraft work, church work, social gatherings, of various kinds, all of which is building a morale among women



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such/does not exist among men.

Among the Nisei, the case is a little different from either of the foregoing groups, for they, like their counterpart among the youthful white Americans, have been accustomed to be on the go, to "travel fast and far." Their experience was probably not as limited as among Issei men, for money-making activities were not the sum total of life to them, but they interspersed their daily routine with studies sports, movies, dances, young people's church work, and other social activities. Nor have the Nisei activities been as strongly curtailed in the War Relocation Projects as have Issei activities, for there are still the same sports, studies, dances, church work, etc., found in their home communities. In fact, the opportunity for one of the chief youthful activities, the carrying on of boy-girl relationships, is probably increased in the intimate circumstances of relocation life. The one outstanding psychological characteristic which characterizes the Nisei as a result of evacuation is that of restlessness, and this gives a cue to an understanding of the effect of evacuation on the Nisei. It seems to be the limitation on movement which most disturbs the Nisei and which frustrates them the most. The barbed wire fence is symbolic of this restriction on movement (until the project area was enlarged to include many acres outside), and the expression of the feelings about this restriction is clearly brought out in such an instance as the following.

Since Chie is leaving for Arkansas to join her fiance in Camp Robinson, a party was started among a small group to give her a send off.....I learned that we were going to the farm for the picnic and wiener roast, and since we were leaving the cantonment, every person would have to be checked out by the armed guard at the gate.



Just as we passed the gate going out onto the highway, numerous remarks were passed around that indicated the relief of our group at gaining a measure of freedom outside the barbed fences again. There was a general murmur: "Oh, we're outside now. Gee, it feels good to get out." Jobu Yasumura: "Ah, the air smells different out here." Myself: "Yeh, what is that strange smell." (joke) Dave Okada: "It does give a sense of relief, doesn't it?" There was much joking about this new freedom. Jobu: "Say, let's stop somewhere to get some beer. There must be some place along the highway here." Girl: "There's a sign says Chicken Dinner at some inn one mile down; how about it?" Michi said, "Oh, there's a tree!" Chorus: "Where, Where?" General craning of the necks to see the tree. We joked along pointing out cows, horses, grass, stores, and all the things we hadn't seen within the cantonment.<sup>1</sup>

This restlessness has expressed itself in other ways, for instance, in the large number of Nisei who snatched at the opportunity of getting out to the sugar beet fields, not alone for what they might earn, but because they wanted to be free from the restrictions of relocation center life. In the period when recruiting for the sugar beet fields was at its height (mid-September), a very common remark among those leaving for the fields was, "I just want to get away from this place."

There is perhaps no great distinction between restlessness and boredom, but both are equally present in the Nisei psychology. I carried on the following conversation with a young man, twenty-one years of age, who is married and has a child.<sup>2</sup>

Joe: "How are you, Frank?"

Myself: "Oh, up and down."

Joe: "Gee whiz, Sunday and not a doggone thing to do."

Myself: "You feel that way too?"

Joe: "Who doesn't?"

One gets a sense of the drabness of life for persons like "Joe", not that there are not abundant channels of activity, for there is more

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<sup>1</sup>Miyamoto Journal, August 5, 1942, pp. 2-3

<sup>2</sup>Miyamoto Journal, September 6, 1942, p. 3.



going on in any single day than any one person could take in alone, but there is an absence of novelty such as one might find in the "big city" on the outside. The stream of life is slow, the landscape is unchanging, and the very houses one lives in are monotonous in the extreme; and, thus, stimulation comes all too infrequently and at too low a level. Of persons in the extremes of despondency, one finds cases like the following; a bachelor girl living with a friend here because she was stranded apart from her family in Hawaii by the outbreak of war. She declared in a moment of pessimism, "I wrote to my parents, 'don't expect me alive.' 'I'm getting so sick of the place, I can't write anything nice any longer.'"<sup>1</sup> An enterprising person with a knack for developing novelties and fads would probably have a field day here, though there has heretofore been no sweeping adoption of new games or practices.

Thus, for most persons in this community, but especially for the sensitive ones, there exists a personal loneliness within the closeness of life in this communal society. The external hilarity of young people is sometimes a false signal of their true feelings, for as one young girl declared, "The life here it so boring and depressing that the only way to fight it off is to act silly!"<sup>2</sup> She apparently expressed the sentiment of a whole group of girls who spend their days about the music building in seeming laughter and gayety. One gets a suggestion of a search on the part of these people for identity with others of kindred interests, but the search goes on in a community where the breadth of contacts is restricted and interests are relatively dormant due to the absence of underlying incentives.

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<sup>1</sup>Miyamoto Journal, September 6, 1942, p.3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, October 4, 1942.



As for children, they too are probably sufferers from the dislocations of evacuation. It was, of course, impossible to bring the variety of toys, which children usually have, to the relocation centers, and one does note the paucity of toys and games in the homes of families with children. Children may frequently be observed with all manner of makeshift toys; a long string which pulls a piece of scrap lumber with tin cans on it, a box nailed on barrel staves which is pulled across the sandy ground, or just a piece of wood used as a spade; and in the more fortunate instances where some kind-hearted person had taken the trouble to shape a real toy, a wooden rocker horse, or a cart with wooden wheels. But on the whole the children seem to make a happier adjustment to the shortcomings of their life here, for although their physical surrounding does not offer a variety of environment that may be explored, there is plenty of room for play and there are always children enough to join in the play groups. From the parental point of view, the communal character of life here sets grave obstacles to the control of their children's environment, but the closeness of the neighborhood also offers possibilities of organization better than in the normal community.

In the Tule Lake community it seems that the one organized channel of relief from the disturbing conditions of a discontented community is recreation. Issei entertainment permits the release of habitual and traditional sentiments which can get no other adequate expression in this community. For the Nisei it offers a check upon boredom and restlessness by allowing an outflow of energy in sheer activity and thus gives momentary significance to life.





## II Incipient Organization

As with every other phase of social organization in the Tule Lake Project, the recreational organization had to begin from scratch without any tried practices or past experience to guide it by. The difficulties of the recreation department, in this respect, were particularly great, for highly centralized community-wide control of recreation is relatively unfamiliar in our society whereas such control is not unfamiliar in the fields of economics, education, politics, and religion. The organization of recreation here is unique for the reason that it administers under its department almost every organized sport, club, handicraft, dance, entertainment, musical, dramatic, forensic, and social activity that goes on in this community, a condition imposed on the recreation department by a general lack of individual equipment for carrying on such activity outside of WRA administration. Furthermore, for a Caucasian administrator supervising the recreational activities of a Japanese community for the first time, it must have been particularly difficult to decide at the outset what activities should be included and what activities should be emphasized.

It was perhaps because of the impossibility of knowing what to expect of the recreational demands of Issei and Nisei evacuees that Mr. Theodore Waller, supervisor of community activities, chose at the outset a policy of almost anarchic control by recreational leaders, in which the central idea was that the leaders themselves should determine the ultimate content and organization of the department. In a sense, Mr. Waller had taken a leaf out of the bible of progressive education; it was his view that the evacuees should be allowed to express their personality fully



by allowing their impulses to indicate where recreation should be developed. This central policy which guided the supervisor during the first period of recreational organization is clearly brought out in a statement made by him as chairman of the Committee on Promotional Training of Colonists Throughout the Project:<sup>1</sup>

"The Committee believes that it should be the policy of the Project to conduct all work activities in such a manner that a maximum amount of specialized training will result from every work assignment. This means that the individual colonist's interests, capacities and vocational objectives must be motivating factors in assignment, transfer, rotation and general supervision. If this objective is to be realized it is imperative that every supervisor from foreman to division chief come to think of the Project as a vast training program."

To some degree, the fact that the community grew slowly with a minimal population to begin with had something to do with the acceptance of this policy, for, as Mr. Waller declares in a report of June 4,<sup>2</sup>

"It has been necessary to, in some degree, develop activities around available personnel rather than to recruit specialized personnel for a predetermined program. Thus far program policy has been formulated as a result of personal contacts with incoming colonists made by the colonists on the recreation staff."

Another fundamental notion which characterized this very democratic policy laid down at the outset was the idea that, wherever possible, the Issei and Nisei should so work together, that through contact in their mutual work situation a better understanding of each other would develop. As far as possible, it was thought undesirable to separate the two generations, and the ideal goal toward which the program worked was of bringing mutual understanding through constant interaction of the two. There was no opposition

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<sup>1</sup>Committee on Promotional Training, June 9, 1942, p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Report on Community Activities, June 4, 1942, p.1.



to Issei activities per se, but there was unquestionably a hope of continuing the Americanization program through such institutional channels as the recreation department.

The first group of evacuees arrived in Tule Lake from the Puyallup and Portland assembly centers on May 28, 1942, and in the following two or three days several recreation leaders were recruited. On June 4, 1942, Mr. Waller reports:<sup>1</sup>

"To date, we have a librarian, a children's worker, an adult group worker, an athletic leader, a specialist in music and entertainment, and an all-round boys' worker."

"Three of these people have had professional training in the fields to which they are assigned. The other three have been selected because of a unique adaptability to the program in which they are working."

"The adult worker has been a radio artist featured on many trans-continental programs and, for whatever reason, is remarkably adroit with the Issei group. The librarian is a young woman of extraordinary intelligence, and imagination, and of very high standing in the community. The children's worker will ultimately be assigned to the library, but in the meantime is the best person available for work with the 6 - 10 age group."

The three with professional training were the athletic leader, a graduate of Willamette University with a physical education major with a teaching certificate in the field; the specialist in music and entertainment, a graduate of the University of Washington with a (piano) music major and a teaching certificate in the field; and the boys' worker, a graduate of Oregon State College working for an M.A. in physical education. None of these persons was an outstanding worker in his field, but each seemed competent in the capacity of leadership. Two of these persons, the music and boys' worker leaders, have left the community, but the athletic leader is continuing as the director of athletics. The

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<sup>1</sup>Report on Community Activities, June 4, 1942, pp.1-2.



adult worker is said to have played the part of "Watanabe," a Japanese servant with an important part, in a radio program put on the air through a Portland station. He undoubtedly had a flair for entertainment, and was a tireless worker at his job, but a prima donna temperament made him a difficult person to work with and he was ultimately displaced by the supervisor in the effort to gain a more stable leadership in the Issei department.<sup>1</sup> The Librarian described as a "young woman of extraordinary intelligence and imagination" was hardly regarded as such in the community from which she came, and had little or no training in librarianship. She continues as the head of her activity division, however, and one suspects that it was the superficially favorable impression which she made upon the supervisor that caused him to select her in the absence of any training qualifications to guide him. The children's worker, a young girl of about twenty-one years, continues as the head of the recreational nursery.

Had the whole community arrived at Tule Lake together, it is likely that the selection of personnel particularly for the roles of leadership would have followed a somewhat different line, but the population trickled in over a period of two months. As it was, it was necessary to choose leaders immediately to get necessary activities under way, while at the same time carrying out a weeding process whereby the best qualified persons would be at the top. To satisfy these dual and contradictory demands, a sheet of paper was posted in the recreation center on which persons desiring to join the recreation staff were requested to place their names and

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<sup>1</sup>The conflicts arising from these initial selections of leaders is brought out in a later section. See p.



the activity which they desired to promote, but at the same time almost every person selected for a position was given the title of "activity leader." The administration repeatedly made the statement that all positions given prior to the relocation of the whole population would be temporary, but in the period of two months over which the relocation took place, it was almost inevitable that persons should gain a vested interest in the positions early assumed.

The secretary of the department who joined the staff quite early described the period as one in which "there was more enthusiasm than organization." Coming as these persons did from the restricted circumstances of the assembly centers, and given a situation in which they were asked to take leadership in organizing where nothing had existed before, it is understandable that a high enthusiasm for work existed among the staff. Many who had specific training for recreational activities and others who possessed developed interests in such activities, but who previously had never found the opportunity of expressing themselves fully in recreational leadership because of the scarcity of openings for non-Caucasians, now were able to realize their ambition.

Some idea of the earliest effort at organization is gained from the following quotation in the first week's progress report by Mr. Waller.<sup>1</sup>

"During the first week of the project (approximately 2½ blocks were filled (about 500 persons) and one mess hall was in operation), two general meetings were held for the purpose of giving anyone interested in recreation an opportunity to present his ideas on program and organization."

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<sup>1</sup>Report on Community Activities, June 4, 1942, p.2.



These meetings developed many ideas bearing on activities and have, in fact, given the program its general direction. They were relatively inconclusive in the area of organization, there being much discussion as to whether recreation should be organized by block, by ward, on a project basis, or by activities. It was finally decided that preliminary organization should be by activities, but the decision was made by a very close vote.

It is contemplated that within the next few days block meetings will be held to further consider a recreation program. These meetings will be supplemented by almost simultaneous activity meetings so that neither category of interest will gain disproportionate momentum."

There was unquestionably a recognized need for recreational activity; indeed, in the requests to the Portland and Puyallup assembly centers for an advance crew, recreational leaders were among the personnel requested. The impetus toward recreational organization must have originated with Mr. Waller, but the general meetings served to publicize the department, give information to the supervisor as to the needs of the people, and crystallize the opinions of the people regarding in the organization of the department.

Ten activities were listed as under way in the first week of the department's operation. The activities included:

1. Newspaper (No longer in community activities).
2. Library--125 books received from the County Library. Building, bookcases, benches, etc. under construction. A library committee formed, inquiring for individual contribution of books.
3. Entertainment--One dance held, and dance class scheduled. Supervised by a committee.
4. Older Women--Forty women in knitting and sewing classes.
5. Issei Men--Adult recreation leader arranged party for Issei lasting from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Japanese games played.
6. Junior Work Corps--Boys and girls from 10 to 16 years operating a messenger service.
7. Sports--Two baseball fields constructed and in constant use. Committees at work on tournaments.
8. Younger Children--First nursery group being organized.
9. Wood Pile--Rec. leaders and block managers supervising salvaging of lumber scrap.
10. Religious activity--(No longer directly under rec. staff)



The most spontaneous responses were to baseball, in which teams organized without urging from the department, to dances and to knitting and crocheting classes for older women. Men were largely concerned with the gathering of lumber and making of furniture and the demand for other forms of recreation among them did not develop until later. On the other hand, the public school program was then several months from inception and there existed a need for recreational activity to keep those of pre-school and school age occupied, but due to the greater need of organization in this area for the successful accomplishment of desired ends, and developments were slow here.

By June 14, Ward 1 was completely filled and the evacuee population of Tule Lake was then about 2,000. Most of this population were from the farming and oyster country in the Puget Sound Area with an additional 500 from the city population at Puyallup and Portland Assembly Centers. A report by Mr. Waller on this date indicates a considerable expansion of recreational activities for thirty to forty specific activities were now under way or being started by contrast with the ten that were originally listed. (See Appendix A) Fourteen softball teams were engaged in league play. Furniture competition was started and exhibitions with prizes were displayed at one of the recreation halls. Clubs, choirs, and music appreciation were other activities that were being installed about this time.

Thus, the community activities grew rapidly and the personnel involved was growing with each new contingent from the assembly centers, but there was also a growing confusion in the department



due to the lack of equipment and proper supervision of the activities. General policies had been stated, but definite procedures had not been outlined, even for the office force which was a key group in this early period of organization. Mr. Waller presumably "knew the answers," but he could never be found when the occasion demanded, and none knew where to locate him. Recreation leaders had been appointed, but no authority was delegated to them; hence, in the absence of equipment with which to start anything, the leaders sat around and waited for others to start something. Even the recreation center at 1808 where the leaders congregated was simply one long room with several long tables in it, but with no possibility of organization until office equipment could be introduced.

It was not until after the gala celebration on July 4, however, that any effort was made to bring order out of the confusion. Sectional conflicts, especially in the Issei department, and Issei-Nisei controversies offered concrete proof of a need for organization. The determination of wage classification also arose as a problem. A Recreation Association was established on June 20 for the purpose of solving some of these difficulties, but the organization was found too bulky to deal with the question of ordering the affairs of the department. It was thereupon decided to establish a Classification Committee, composed of three members of the staff and two non-members, to recommend to the Supervisor an organizational plan for the section and a job classification for the purpose of pay determination. This committee first met on July 7, and it was not until late in August that



recommendations were submitted to the Supervisor.

### III. Formal Organization

The outcome of the meetings of the Classification Committee was an organization chart of the community activities section, a job description of each department under this section, and a series of recommendations for the more efficient functioning of the section. (These recommendations are embodied in Chart I, and in Appendix .)

The scope of organization is project-wide with centralized control in the Supervisor (Caucasian) and the Assistant Supervisor (Nisei), and with specialized activities directed by evacuee personnel. It is unlikely that any other organizational structure would have been feasible given the conditions of this community for buildings, playgrounds, and equipment are almost all WRA and community property and private recreational activities are almost completely restricted. For instance, in each block is a recreation hall, but neither individuals nor blocks can claim exclusive use of these buildings since community-wide activities such as sewing and knitting classes, adult education classes, Japanese card tournaments, and dances must have access to these halls. Conflicts have inevitably arisen due to the necessity for centralized control on the one hand, and the impulse of individuals and small groups to develop their recreational interests outside the range of total organization, but in general the community activities department has been able to maintain control through minor compromises with the demands of individual and block group demands. Total organization, however, gives rise to a condition



in which individuals and groups cannot any longer be held accountable for their conduct in organized recreational activities, but the recreation department can be made responsible for anything which occurs in any of these activities. Beginning about June 15 when the Walerga group started their relocation to this center, criticisms of the social dances put on by the recreation department became increasingly loud, partly due to the sectional fear of Issei parents from the Pacific Northwest of the "rowdy" Sacramento youths. While it was the "rowdy" element who were criticized in the rumors and gossip about the misconduct of youths after dances, it was the recreation department which was called upon to curb the alleged "nocuturnal activity" by reducing the number of dances, and by closer supervision of them.

In a community of 15,000 people, a project-wide organization of recreation is bound to have the shortcoming of not reaching all the people and meeting their recreational needs. In fact, one would have to regard it as a miracle if such an organization could even partially meet these demands. As in any institution serving a large aggregation of people, the community activities section suffers from poor adaptability to individual needs, and while the staff has attempted to reduce this problem by increasing the variety of activities offered, there develops a limit beyond which a centrally controlled organization cannot extend itself. It was also the hope and anticipation of the Supervisor that voluntary help would be available in the blocks and wards such that recreational activities originating at the center could reach the smallest cells of the community, but voluntary aid never ma-



terialized--due to an attitude that a person should be paid for what he does here--and the department was forced to the alternative of expanding the paid personnel, probably considerably beyond the original intention. As a result, the organization has little concreteness for persons in the community; and one can observe it in action only as it presents a scheduled performance, either as a member of the passive audience or as a participant if one has special talents. The inability to promote informal recreational activity within small intimate groups seems to be one of the chief shortcomings of the present project-wide organization.

One effort, suggested by the Classification Committee and now being undertaken by the staff, for reducing this disparity between total organization and the recreational demands of people in blocks and wards, is the appointment of ward activity leaders. The function of this leader is to promote social relationships in the nine blocks within his ward, and to seek competitive and co-operative recreational activities with other wards. The reasonableness of the proposition appears in fact that the blocks are the natural social and political units of relocation projects, and if recreation is to be a factor in the building of community morale, there is no place where it can better begin than in the blocks. But the difficulties of starting this ward program are great. There is first the problem of finding seven men in the respective wards energetic and capable enough to make the program a significant reality, but such talent seems extremely rare. Again, there is the problem of meeting both Issei and Nisei demands, of developing the interests of the old and the young, but this presents an almost insuperable obstacle. The only hope