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BROADCAST AFFAIR

Tule Lake

Preliminary Report
(Confidential)

BROADCAST AFFAIR

I. Introduction

The Broadcast Affair was started with a special Council meeting on the afternoon of September 28. By the following evening the matter was dispensed with as far as the colonists were concerned. In that short time two council meetings, two block meetings, and one meeting of Issei representatives from blocks were held and a decision was reached that the colonists would not concede the request of the Office of War Information to send a shortwave broadcast directed at Japan. While some of the discussion was heated, the whole process was quickly settled. But the repercussions from this affair were great.

Up to this point there had been much discontent among the colonists, but most of it was directed toward the War Relocation Authority or members of the Caucasian staff. As a result of the Broadcast Affair, however, an obvious split was created between the Isseis and Niseis. The Niseis felt that the Isseis had not considered their welfare in settling the Broadcast Affair and the Community Council arrived at a decision opposite to the one resulting from a meeting dominated by Isseis. The matter was finally settled by referring it to block meetings, where Isseis usually dominated. As a result when the Theater Project came up for discussion in the Community Council soon after, the Council decided not to refer this matter to the block, and as a representative body voted in favor of the Theater Project. The antagonism of the Isseis toward the Councilmen was immediate and open. In this manner the traditional gulf between the first

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and second generation was brought out into the open. The Broadcast Affair was significant in bringing this about.

The following is a chronological account of the Broadcast Affair from the time the matter was first broached to the Councilmen at a special Council meeting until the final vote from the blocks was recorded at the regular Council meeting the following night.

II. Chronological Account

A. Special Council Meeting

On September 28, 1942, a special Council meeting was called to order by chairman Gerry Wakayama at 5:30 P.M. at messhall No. 1720 to discuss the possibility of having a broadcast of the Project given by the colonists. As guests of the afternoon the following were introduced:

Mr. Dennis McEvoy, Deputy Chief of Far Eastern
Division, Office of War Information, Washington, D.C.

Mr. Charles O'Brien, Chief of Special Events Section,
San Francisco Office of War Information.

Mr. Werner, Office of War Information, San Francisco.

Mr. Dunning, KWID, radio operator.

Mr. DeWitt, KWID, radio operator.

Although there were no advance notices at all, these men were in the Project on urgent and important business. They had come with permission from Washington D.C., and also with sound equipment and trained radio men among them, in order to ask the colonists for a broadcast of condition within the camp. The matter had to be settled immediately because they could not stay for more than a few days in order to complete this task of making recordings for the broadcasting. Perhaps they felt that it would

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not be difficult to convince the colonists that it would be to their advantage to participate in this broadcast or perhaps they did not know the nature of the Japanese people or the feelings of dissatisfaction and suspicion they maintained about this time.

As the spokesman for the group from the Office of War Information, Mr. McEvoy explained his business to the councilmen. He said that Radio-Tokyo was spreading propaganda that the Japanese in the relocation centers were "being starved, beaten, murdered, and subjected to such brutality that unless stopped, Japan would take corresponding measures on the American people in the Far East." Mr. McEvoy believed that such propaganda could be spiked by transmitting to Japan by radio the truth as to what was actually going on within this WRA project. Mr. McEvoy asked the Council whether it was willing to aid the Office of War Information in their plea for cooperation. He said that the Office of War Information asked for "the Council's views, advice, and suggestions in achieving their end here."

Mr. McEvoy and Mr. Dunning explained how the recording was to be done. They desired to have recordings of various groups such as the Boy Scouts and children. They wanted programs given by the orchestra, hospital scenes and other phases of the project, which showed the true condition within the Project.

Mr. Shirrell, the Project Director, added the plea to that of the others, saying that it was necessary for the sake of the Americans in the Far East that the people in the Project cooperate with the request of the Office of the War Information.

In return the Office of War Information promised that they would do all it could to stop malicious rumors concerning the

sabotage committed by Japanese and Japanese-Americans in the United States. While this visiting division of the Office of War Information was concerned merely with foreign war information, it promised to request the domestic Office of War Information to clear such malicious rumors through local broadcasts. It was pointed out that the cooperation of the Council would help the question of Nisei citizenship, through national and international publicity of this sort. The Council was again asked for its cooperation.

Evidently the councilmen felt that it was too sudden and too important a matter for them to decide immediately without consultation with their block advisors. Since the matter had been brought up so suddenly they did not know just where their block people stood on the question. A councilman suggested that Mr. McEvoy speak to the block advisors personally to present his urgent request. A motion was made and passed that councilmen confer with block residents and return the following morning at 8:30 A.M. to No. 1720 with the block advisory council.^{1/}

B. Block Meeting

That evening in most of the blocks some sort of meeting was held to discuss this matter of cooperation with the Office of War Information. In some blocks a meeting of all block residents was held. In others only the block advisory committee, usually consisting of one representative from each barrack, mostly Isseis, was called together to discuss this matter. In either case it is significant that most block meetings are carried on in Japanese (unless the block manager or the councilman find it too difficult

^{1/} Special Council Meeting, September 25, 1942.

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to speak Japanese) and usually dominated by Isseis. It should be remembered also that at this time the persons who did most of the talking at these meetings were those who were generally termed "agitators" and not the quieter and more representative ones in the block.

According to a roll call taken at a council meeting, the following day, roughly 22 blocks were against the broadcast, 7 in favor of it without condition, and 21 in favor of it with certain conditions. In other words, the vote was split about evenly, with the final decision depending on the condition under which the broadcast would be permitted. The trend of opinion in one block which was opposed to the broadcast will be given to illustrate the kind of opinions that prevail in many blocks. It should be remembered that this block was probably among the most reactionary of all the blocks in the Project and represented an extreme stand on the matter.

A block meeting was called together on the evening of September 28 in the block manager's office. Most of the persons attending were Isseis. Among them were persons who had been opposed in the past to cooperation with the WRA administration. The councilman from the block gave a report on several items, including the Theater Project, but all of these issues were overshadowed by the Broadcast Affair. The councilman spoke in Japanese, and was not particularly desirous of expressing his own opinions for the Niseis, leaving the Niseis without any voice at all in this matter.

After the proposition by Mr. McEvoy was roughly presented and the floor opened to discussion, there was a great deal of animated talking. The greatest number of opinions expressed were of a suspecting nature. The persons giving these opinions

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felt that it couldn't do the Japanese people any good to take part in such a broadcast. The recordings could be changed or misused or they could switch off the program whenever they desired and substitute whatever they desired. They doubted that they would be allowed to tell the truth in the first place. Even if the broadcast were to be done, they felt that they should hear the broadcast given in order to be sure that nothing was twisted. "Watch out for a pitfall," was the warning of one person when it was suggested that delegates be sent to a meeting the following morning.

Another feeling that could be inferred from the discussion was one of triumph because Japanese seemed to be winning in the present battle. Some felt that since Japanese were winning there was no sense in jeopardizing matters by doing anything. Someone said that it was all right if we are persecuted over here. Another person thought that the whole matter should be left up to Tojo and not meddled with by colonists.

A few persons seemed to be curious about what was actually happening in the Orient. They asked that we be allowed to hear the broadcast from Japan before we were allowed to do our own broadcasting. It was probably mostly out of curiosity that these people wanted to hear news from Japan. They had been kept in ignorance about happenings in Japan since the beginning of the year. Part of this request was based on the supposition that the truth of the claim made by Mr. McEvoy could be verified by listening to broadcasts from Radio-Tokyo.

A few men expressed the opinion that it was all right to broadcast if the truth were to be told. This was probably felt a good opportunity to broadcast to the world the sort of treat-

the Japanese in America were receiving. There was probably also the feeling that relatives and friends in Japan would be relieved to know that the colonists were still alive and not treated too badly.

All of the opinions, however, were mixed in with a feeling that this might be a trap of some sort. Even the few in favor of the broadcast insisted that full precautionary measures be taken to see that the broadcast was not twisted in any way.

The general trend of opinion in the block was "no." The Block Manager, however, suggested that since there was to be a meeting the following morning, all those who could attend the meeting should go and listen to what Mr. McEvoy had to say. With this understanding the meeting was closed.

C. Broadcast Assembly

On the morning of September 29, councilmen and representatives from the various blocks gathered together at No. 1720. The hall was packed, so that besides the 40 or 50 odd councilmen, about 250 others must have been in that hall. These latter were almost wholly Isseis, who had enough interest in the question to come to this meeting. It was probably a select group of people who had something to say or the type that would talk at other meetings. In all probability they did not represent the quieter type of Issei who were more likely to listen to reason instead of flaring up emotionally. For this meeting a public address system was set up in front of the hall.

Gerry Wakayama, chairman of the Council, acted as chairman for this meeting. While he was capable enough, he was not a forceful person who could keep a discussion to the point and under

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control. Since he was not too fluent in Japanese it was difficult for him to attempt to keep the emotions of the people from running away with the discussion. Since there was a large group of Isseis it was necessary for the speeches of the Caucasians to be translated into Japanese and the Japanese speeches translated back to English.

Mr. McEvoy was first given the floor to present his plea for cooperation. He made it clear in his speech that he did not wish to interfere in any way with the program presented by the Japanese people which was to be broadcasted. He stated that all they wanted was the truth about what was going on in the Project. He said that such questions as "is there forced labor under military supervision?" would be asked. He ended up by saying that "our enemies believe that the best propaganda is lies; we believe that it is the truth."

This was translated by a Nisei who had been selected in advance for this purpose. After giving the translation, he asked Mr. McEvoy whether it was likely that the translator would be blamed for not translating correctly. Mr. McEvoy replied that he was perfectly satisfied with the translation. The chairman was not certain as to how to proceed with the discussion. He asked whether he should ask questions by wards or should take the questions by aisles. Someone demanded that the discussion be open to everyone. It didn't make any difference where the questions came from, he continued, because all Japanese were the same. The chairman decided to throw the floor open to everyone.

The first man to speak was clearly emotionally aroused. He had a son in the Army and had every intention of bringing up his children as good American citizens. He had heard, however, that

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there was talk in Congress of depriving Niseis of citizenship, which distressed him a great deal. He said in part, in Japanese:

What I felt now is that we do not feel any physical hunger. but we have received much spiritual . If they are going to broadcast only the good part, I am against it, (Great applause) for the past 40 so many years we have labored hard to bring up splendid Niseis. I hear they are trying to take away their citizenship. I was hoping that they would be able to fight for America. (Big applause) I would like to show our real feeling to the whole world. (More applause.)

There was no one to translate this speech. Mr. McEvoy, who understood a little Japanese seemed to have gotten the drift of the speech. The translator already selected did not want to undertake the job of translating the speech of the Japanese into English. Noboru Honda, a Nisei Block Manager, was called upon to translate speeches made by Japanese from this point on. Mr. McEvoy, however, replied to the first speech in the following manner.

I would like to say this. There have been mistakes. This is not part of the discussion today. We are not the Government officials responsible for whatever goes on within these camps. We are simply a Government agency engaged in radio work, the voice of the Government of the United States. I hope that this conversation today can be limited to questions of the matter at hand. All that we are asking is the facts in this particular War Relocation Center. That is all, the facts. So far as the spiritual side goes, that too is important, but all we are here for is for facts. The case of the gentleman was adequately presented, but we are not here to discuss that.

The air was tense with emotion. The chairman called for quiet, and everyone kept still. It seemed a triumphant moment for the Japanese who could say what they really felt. The translator for Mr. McEvoy replied that the plight of the Japanese, so far as the Japanese people were concerned, was partly the responsibility of any American. He thought that Mr. McEvoy could not say that it was not his responsibility that the Japanese were put in a camp. If Mr. McEvoy meant that only the good part of the camp was going to be broadcasted, he felt that

he was against it. In fact, he thought that there would be no use in carrying the meeting on any further.

Because of the language difficulty there was some confusion for some moments. Mr. McEvoy evidently learned from someone else that the first speaker had mentioned the fact that the citizenship of the Niseis was to be taken away. He came forward and said that this rumor was not true. Someone asked that they hear from Mr. Walter Tsukamoto, because he probably knew more about it than anybody else.

Walter came forward and said that he had made an announcement at a Council meeting that a bill depriving Niseis of citizenship was passed in the House of Representatives. There was a telegram to Dr. Jacoby saying that this was not true, he said, but he did not know because he had not seen the telegram. Anyway, there were other bills pending which still meant to take the citizenship of the Niseis away. At this defense by Walter of his own position because of an erroneous announcement he had made, Mr. McEvoy and Mr. Shirrell seemed to be angry. Mr. McEvoy referred the matter to Mr. Shirrell.

Mr. Shirrell took the opportunity to say what he wanted to. After reassuring the Japanese that every effort would be made to fight any bill attempting to disenfranchise the Japanese, he went on to point out the necessity of the Japanese people to help the American because if they were to receive better treatment. He said in part: "This morning we had trouble, weakening the hands of the WRA. The farmers refused to cut and pack vegetables because of this citizenship matter. They will not supply the American public. I have to say that my colony will not pack food for Americans. People who are enemies of the Japanese people will

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say: 'I told you so!' They are playing with dynamite. I cannot defend such action against the outside people. We are playing into the hands of the enemies if we refuse to sell food to the outside world. I am satisfied that there are definite agitators who are working against the WRA, but even if the F.E.R. is called in, we must find them and send them out of this center. The way to fight the citizenship bill is not to stop producing food. We are to stop the brutality directed against Americans in the East by broadcasting the facts of treatment here in the WRA colonies." This speech was translated by Mr. Honda.

The chairman called attention to the fact that they were getting off the topic. Next a World War veteran, an Issei who had been given citizenship, evidently, came up. He said that conditions in the Tule Lake Center were tolerable, but that other centers did not seem to be as good. He said that he and his block were against the broadcast if only Tule Lake was going to be broadcasted.

Mr. McEvoy answered that it was their intention to deal first with Tule Lake only and then possibly deal with other centers later on.

The next speaker was rather outspoken. He started out by remarking thus: "If we lose we will be despised and if we win we will be despised again. I believe that it is best that we suffer winning." When he said "we," he meant the Japanese, of course. He said that if the broadcast were to be only a matter of answering questions about food and shoes, he was against it. He thought that the Japanese people should be allowed to make up their own program and be allowed to say what they pleased. He felt that if the program were not for the good of the Japanese people, then they should not do any broadcasting.

Mr. McEvoy probably saw that he was fighting a losing battle. He explained once more that this request was urgent. It meant the protection of the lives of allied soldiers and civilians in the Far East. He said that there has been mistreatment in the past. He feared that if the falsehood of brutality of relocation centers were allowed to continue, Japan would use it as an excuse to mistreat the allied soldiers more severely. He ended by saying: "We call upon all patriotic citizens to help protect the lives of soldiers over there. We ask that they simply tell the truth. We are simply asking you to state the truth. It is a vital matter to every American and to anyone who is interested in maintaining a civilized standard."

Mr. McEvoy's attitude had become rather icy. His mention of civilized standards and acts of brutality, however, aroused some interest in favor of the broadcast.

One person, doubting Mr. McEvoy's statements to the effect that Japanese were mistreating her prisoners asked for details of conditions in Japan. This Mr. McEvoy gave in vivid detail. He said that conditions in the relocation centers were nine thousand times better than overseas. He ended by saying: "We can save the lives of those people over there and will prevent discrediting Japan to the world as a civilized country." On hearing of these brutalities, the people in the audience seemed to quiet down considerably. It seemed as though their soft nature was appealed to, but there were still doubts as to the truth of Mr. McEvoy's reports. The same fellow insisted on hearing the broadcast from Japan in order to learn the truth. He also mentioned the fact that at the time of farmers' strike they had only two toasts for breakfast.

Mr. McEvoy's patience was evidently being tried. He said: "If you don't trust what I tell you, that is entirely your affair. I want to explain one thing about the project. Nobody would be told what to say. The people who wanted to speak of medical care will be free to do so. Those who are against it, will be free to speak. In any community there is bound to be some mistake. I give you my word of honor that nowhere in the Far East is their physical treatment equal to this place. The cooperation of this group means more than just for this group. We are representing a government office affiliated with the Armed Forces. We have asked for a cooperation on the basis of truth of this camp. It is up to you to decide." There was a note of threat in Mr. McEvoy's last words.

Someone else brought up the fact that his block was in favor of a broadcast only if they were allowed to hear broadcasts from Japan first. Mr. Shirrell replied that for the condition in the Far East the people had to take someone else's word for it. He said that he would see what could be done about hearing the broadcast from Japan, but he said that people were not allowed to have shortwave radios on the Project.

Someone else brought up the fact that reports from others could not be trusted because the propaganda from Hawaii saying that Japanese were sabotaging the place were not true. Mr. McEvoy merely replied by saying that the true story of Hawaii could be told from here. He would also try to get it broadcasted more widely through Washington. With these words the Caucasians left the hall, leaving the Japanese to decide the matter for themselves.

After the Caucasians left, the discussion continued. One Issei got up and made several interesting remarks. He said that up to this point Nisei councilmen have been deciding all

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of the matters of the community. He thought that Isseis should also take part in any project of the community. In this matter of the broadcast he felt that the Isseis should play the major role. Then he said that any broadcast was bound to be used for propaganda purposes for the United States Government. He thought that if the Japanese Government desired to know anything about the condition of the camps, it would seek information through the proper channels. He thought that through the Spanish ambassador this matter of finding the real condition within a camp could be learned. He thought that it would be sufficient to say that the people are well if a broadcast were to be given, but to say that details should be gotten from the Spanish ambassador. This man received a good applause, and several persons backed him up by saying that the Office of War Information was looking for propaganda material.

Another man then got up and said that he was definitely against the broadcast. This in itself brought him a lot of applause. Then he went on to explain that it wouldn't be well for us as Japanese to make a broadcast which might weaken the Japanese position by saying, for instance, that the Japanese people here were being well-treated. With an air of finality he said that there should be other means of getting news to Japan than by means of a broadcast from the Japanese. This man received a great deal of applause for his fiery speech.

Time was becoming short. The mess hall would soon have to be vacated to prepare the lunch. The chairman pointed out this fact and concluded that there were three suggestions:

1. Absolutely against the broadcast.
2. For the broadcast.
3. To reveal the conditions here through the Spanish ambassador.

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At this point, Mr. Suzuki, a councilman, seeing that the decision was going to be against the broadcast, asked that the Council reconvene in the afternoon in order to settle this matter more orderly. A vote was taken, and the majority signified their desire to settle the matter immediately. Another councilman asked for a short conference of delegates, but this too was voted down in favor of an immediate decision. The meeting had started to become disorganized. The chairman called for a roll call by blocks. As the no of each block was called out, someone from the audience answered. Nothing was done to ascertain that a responsible party answer for the block.

In answer to the roll call, 32 blocks answered no, 25 yes on condition, and 4 remained undecided. Up to block 25 the answer was overwhelmingly no. This was undoubtedly the result of the pressure of the whole assembly, which voiced mainly opinions overwhelmingly against the broadcast. The chairman hesitated to announce that the "no" vote had carried. Someone pointed out that the "no's" were in the majority. The chairman asked if it were all right to consider the matter settled. A cry of approval arose, and when it was decided that the matter was settled, a triumphant cry was heard throughout the crowd. One person was heard to shout "Banzai" as the crowd streamed out of the hall.

After the meeting a small group of people dissatisfied with the results of that gathering clustered outside of the mess hall. Most of them were councilmen, but a few Isseis were present too. They argued that the other side didn't have a chance to voice their opinion. An Issei remarked that people with reasonable opinions could not be expected to express himself in a meeting of that sort. What was discussed was not the broadcast, but the dissatisfaction the people felt against the American people. Some of the