

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

Education might be broadly defined as the means whereby a group attempts to perpetuate its skills, customs and values by inculcating these traits into the habits and sentiments of the younger members. The evacuees in Tule Lake, however, face special problems because of the peculiar nature of the situation in which they find themselves. On the one hand, the youngsters are confronted by the values by which their parents live; on the other, by the values which are taught in the public schools. This is not to say that the value systems are entirely different, but there are enough significant differences to make for difficulties.

We shall be concerned in this section primarily with formal education--the formalized modes of transmission found in all specialized, technological societies. Educational opportunities are provided for all who understand English in the eight nursery schools, three grammar schools, high school, and adult education classes. Arrangements are now being made for higher education for those of college age. We shall also concern ourselves briefly with the working of the Student Relocation Council, set up for those who wish to learn elsewhere.

Informal Education

Youngsters of any immigrant group face difficulties in their formative years, for sometimes what they learn at home is quite at odds with what they are taught to believe outside. Quite often a child is disappointed when his actions, thoroughly approved outside, meet with disapproval and reproach at

home. The Nisei have been reared under two values; some have chosen one, some the other. On the whole, one might say that the school and the neighborhood have been more powerful factors than the home since most Nisei unconsciously accept American ways; however, the evacuation crisis may have caused some to shift their sentiments.

Another difficulty faced by children of immigrants is the difficulty in communication. Very few are the Issei who speak English fluently. However, the Nisei who cultivates his knowledge of the Japanese language too much often finds himself embarrassed in his dealings with Caucasians or other Nisei. Nonetheless, in spite of differences in language and in spite of the influence of the schools and friends, one cannot discount the powerful weight of the primary group controls.

Two factors that may have increased the influence of the primary group controls in Tule Lake are (1) the close living quarters and (2) the sentiments aroused by the evacuation itself. The close quarters seriously hampers the activities of an individual for rumors and gossip spreads like wildfire. This probably heightened the apprehension of some parents at the un-Japanese ways of their offsprings and may have led to a tightening of controls. Further, the evacuation in which citizens and aliens were uprooted alike made it difficult for the Nisei to argue with their parents over various issues and claim that they were no longer bound by old ideals "because they were Americans." The Issei had claimed that blood was more important than citizenship and the debacle gave some justification to their view.

Besides the approval and disapproval in the family, the Nisei youth is surrounded by influences in the community. The church without question has much effect. The recreation department is another factor in socialization, for it provides clubs, classes, group activities, and other media for the exchange of thoughts. The Community Forum sponsored by the recreation department also served. Finally, the Tulean Dispatch is read assiduously by most colonists.

One factor in socialization that cannot be ignored is the age-group gang. The basis for the formation of gangs and cliques are many: territorial proximity, previous acquaintance, classroom friendships, and similar interests in sports, among other things. The rapid spread of phrases such as "haba haba", "c'm on now", "get'cha down", "hi'ya", and "was' time" indicates to some extent the influence of gangs on the inquisitive and imitative minds.

It is indeed unfortunate that this very important segment of the educational process in Tule Lake could not be covered in more detail. However, lack of reliable data must limit our discussion.

Student Relocation

Strictly speaking, Student Relocation should not fall within the sphere of education in Tule Lake. The National Student Relocation Council was set up for the purpose of helping Nisei students get out of the various centers to continue the training that was interrupted by the evacuation order. It was set up by the American Friends Service Committee upon the request of the Wa R. A. because many felt that students who might some day be of great service to humanity are being deprived of the opportunity to train themselves for their responsibilities. As we shall see, everything did not turn out in accordance with the ideals.

Interest in student relocation gained and waned several times in Tule Lake. During June, the Tulean Dispatch published several encouraging editorials and articles about the possibilities of students being relocated. However, since no one was released from the camps, many Nisei began to look upon the committee with doubt and suspicion. Most Nisei seemed to feel that it would be almost impossible to get out of the center anyway.

On July 1, the interest in relocation suddenly rose when Floyd Schmoee of the Friends Service Committee visited the center. In a sultry evening, he addressed about 150 Nisei--mostly from Sacramento--and asked them to form a Tule Lake Student Relocation Committee to handle some of the work in the project.

At that time, representatives were selected from four regions from which the majority of the students attending the meeting had come--Washington, Oregon, Sacramento, and the Bay Region. Mr. Schmoee then selected an old friend to be chairman and picked another Nisei girl to be secretary. This selection caused some resentment since both the selectees were from Washington and the majority of the students were from California. However, the matter was soon forgotten since the committee did not do anything anyway.

The first meeting of the Tule Lake Committee was held on July 3, but nothing definite was accomplished. The first Nisei to be relocated left camp on July 8, but he was such a brilliant student that most people did not think it too unusual. From that time until November the interest in the committee was negligible. Many Nisei had become tired of the camp and wanted to get out badly, but so few were getting out that most of them gave up in despair. Many had filled out questionnaires but had received no replies and assumed that nothing had been done for them. Some of the Nisei felt:

"Those damn Student Relocation guys--they talk big but they don't do a damn thing."

"Those guys are in for their own. Don't ever think a keto would work like that for us for nothing."

"I guess they're trying hard, but they're up against too much."

"Nobody can get out of this place anyway."

"Gee, I'd sure like to get out. I've written and written. I've been accepted in four colleges, but I still can't get out. I think the bottleneck is in Berkeley."

"I guess I may as well make the best of it in camp. The chances of getting out are bad. Maybe I'll go to the sugar beets and then go to school from there. The committee is too slow."

In spite of the expressions of disgust, whenever a member of the committee or anyone vaguely connected to the committee visited the camp, he was swamped by Nisei who wanted to know what happened to their applications.¹ Some students

1. It is interesting to note that the very individuals who had made the remarks quoted above were among those who were the first to demand to see the Caucasians connected to the committee.

made an effort to see every person connected with education who came to the center. Thus, when Dr. Blaisdell visited the colony to see if something could not be done about higher education in the colony itself, he was swamped by students who wanted him to exert his influence in getting them out of the center. Some of them said:

"I was told that I was on the list of people who couldn't get out because I am a Kibei and the Army won't let any Kibei out. Can't they just make one exception? I promise that I won't do anything bad. After all one exception isn't going to mean anything. I can't see why I can't get out. I don't care how the general program is coming out."

"I've written and written but they just tell me to wait until the Army sends a permit. Can't you tell them for me that I'm in a hurry?"

Gradually in September the W.R.A. and Army regulations relaxed and it became possible for some to leave. One by one, students began to go out to school, but on the whole, there was very little for the Tule Lake committee to do. For one thing, many had forgotten that a committee existed in the colony. Furthermore, wary of the competence of the committee in Berkeley, many Nisei applied for admittance on their own and tried to get out by their own efforts. They did not realize that the only channel through which they could get educational leaves was the Student Relocation Council. By the end of October, about 50 students had left for colleges.

The work in student relocation received a definite stimulus when Dr. Howard K. Beale, the newly appointed executive secretary of the Council, visited the colony on October 31. He talked to several of those who wished to go and then helped to reorganize the committee that Mr. Schmoee had set up so that some work could be done. The Tulean Dispatch cooperated by running several articles on the following week. Procedures were finally established for getting general information, for counseling, for obtaining leaves, and for the distribution of questionnaires. From this point on, many Nisei poured daily into the social welfare office to make arrangements for leaving. Their attitude of disgust was still apparent, but many changed their minds as students began leaving.

It was indeed unfortunate that a more careful selection was not made of the students to leave. Actually, only those with money enough to support themselves left the centers. There were a few of exceptional brilliance who were given scholarships, but since the Army required proof that Nisei will not become public charges, the selection was entirely on the basis of financial eligibility. Many Nisei who had never before mingled with Caucasian, some with extremely pro-Japanese attitudes, some with extremely bitter attitudes, many who wished to leave only to get out of the disagreeable situation in Tule Lake were allowed to get out because they had money. Others who had mingled well with Caucasians before, some with extremely high scholastic averages were not allowed to go because they could not satisfy the financial requirement. As a result of this poor selection, some colleges in the East refused to accept any more Nisei. Unfavorable impressions were made by those Nisei who insisted upon staying in racial cliques, and these situations greatly hampered the work of the committee.

The following were some of the reasons given when asked why students wanted to go to school:

- 1) "I don't see any sense in sticking around here. If we're immobilized for the duration, I figure I might as well make the most of it and get an education."
- 2) "You can't learn anything in a dump like this. Why stick around in a place like this?"
- 3) "I hate this place. Anything to get out of here."
- 4) "I'm going to Japan after the war and I want to have some training so I can get a job."
- 5) "I miss the old life at the J.S.C. I want to pal around with some Nisei students. This place is too dull. I've got a lot of friends in Colorado and I figure I might as well go out with them and have some fun."
- 6) "I want to finish my work for my degree. I don't know what good a degree will do me but I want one."

The majority of those who applied for leaves were sophomores and juniors in college who wished to finish their work. The number of high school graduates was small.

Thus, the student relocation finally got under way in the fall after many disappointments. Many Nisei, bent upon getting out and not caring how, cursed the slowness of the committee, but took every advantage of anything they could get from it. Unfortunately many deserving students were unable to go because of their low financial status.

Adult Education

Because of the delays in other departments of education, the Adult Education Department bore the brunt of the educational work (i.e., formal instruction) in Tule Lake during the first half year. Under the competent direction of Dr. Marion Francis, formerly of the American Museum of Natural History staff, the program got under way early in June and hit its peak in August and September. It was indeed fortunate that the director was a woman of unusual efficiency and wide interest. Since the high school did not open until late in September, since the higher education program is yet to begin, and since the student relocation program was so slow in starting, a wide variety of courses^s—many ordinarily taught in high schools and colleges rather than in adult education—were offered. The only restriction seemed to be the availability of teachers whom Dr. Francis felt were competent. Any course for which a competent teacher could be found among the colonists and for which enough students registered was offered.

Early in June, classes were started in typing, shorthand, and general clerical training. Mrs. Shirrell began teaching courses in English for the Issei. This work continued throughout the months of June and July, and it was not until the first of August that a more comprehensive program began. Courses were then offered in American history, agriculture, clothing (sewing and pattern drafting), commercial subjects, cosmetology, economics, English, philosophy, art, floriculture, flower arrangement, political science, sociology, mathematics, speech, and marriage problems.⁴

4. For a complete list of courses see the Tulean Dispatch, August 3, 1942.

This varied program continued until fall, when the enrollment began to fall because of the opening of high school, the rising interest in student relocation (many of the teachers were among those to leave), and the coming of cold weather which made it hard to attend night classes. Furthermore, conflicts arose between the supervisor and several of the teachers and many of the staff resigned. At present, the emphasis is on commercial subjects, sewing and pattern drafting, and English for the Issei. There are a few additional courses being offered, such as, psychology, but such courses are being taken over by the high school and the higher education program.

During its peak, adult education classes drew from four to several hundred students. Without question, the English and sewing classes had the best attendance. These classes were attended primarily by Issei and Kibei although many young Nisei matrons signed up for sewing (since that is something that the Japanese feel all women should know). Most of the other classes were attended largely by Nisei high school graduates who wished to further their training and background.

When asked why they attended classes, some Nisei replied:

"I want to make the most of my stay in camp. There's no use sitting around and brooding. I want to take advantage of my stay here and learn something that will help me when I get out." (Most common reply)

"I know I'm weak in some subjects. I've always wanted to learn some of these things, but I never got a chance to study before because I had to work."

"No use wasting time. I want to improve myself so that in the hard times after the war I'll have something to offer."

Inasmuch as attendance and work was not compulsory, adult education work placed a great strain on the young teachers, most of whom had never had any teaching experience before. In spite of the cooperative attitude of the students who came, some of the teachers did not take their responsibilities seriously. Although on the whole, the teachers worked conscientiously, some had the feeling:

"Why should I work? Those dumb ninnies don't know what the hell's going on anyway."

"This is the easiest job I could find. That's the only reason I'm teaching."

"This is just a pastime for me until I get the hell out of here."

The lack of the feeling of responsibility on the part of some teachers, however, was but one of the many problems which confronted the department. The major problem was one of the strained relationships between many of the teachers and Dr. Francis. As we have noted, she was an extremely efficient woman, and she expected everyone on the staff to live up to her standards. She required a weekly report on attendance and progress; she attended some of the classes herself to check up on the quality of the teaching. Furthermore, her personality seemed distasteful to many who came in contact with her. Some typical comments were:

"Boy, is she snooty! She's always licking the ceiling. Her nose is up so high it's a wonder she can see where she's going."

"Dr. Francis is very nice, but she is so easily hurt that I'm afraid to disagree with her. I guess she knows her stuff all right, but it's sure hard to get along with her."

"Isn't she funny? She reminds me of a high society woman walking around a mule barn."

"That red-headed bitch! She wants everything her own way. We can't do anything on our own initiative."

As a matter of fact, it was difficult for anyone to take the initiative in anything, since for the sake of efficiency everything was regimented and had to pass over her desk. That is not to say that Dr. Francis was not open to suggestions, but everything had to have her approval before it could be done. The crisis came on August 10, when she announced at a staff meeting that there were certain rules that had to be followed and that everything had to go through the "proper channels." She demanded that everyone teach ~~22~~ 22 hours a week and spend 22 hours more on preparation. Most teachers, being inexperienced, felt that they could not prepare a one-hour lecture in one hour and protested. It was learned

later that the ruling had been made by Mr. Harkness, head of the education department, against the wishes of Dr. Francis. However, it was too late. Many of the best teachers on the staff resigned in protest and sought jobs elsewhere.

Complaints were numerous about incompetent teachers. Some were not individuals who took their work seriously; others simply did not have the background to teach. In some classes, antiquated and obsolete material was presented. In others, the instructors taught their own points of view--being wholly oblivious to the existence of other schools of thought. Some of the comments among college graduates were:

"That guy teaching! Heaven help the poor students!"

"He doesn't know anything about _____. He doesn't know his ass from a hole in the ground."

"He only went to college for two years. I don't think he learned anything then. In fact, it's a wonder he ever got out of high school."

On the other hand, some teachers were warmly praised:

"He works so hard for only \$19. I certainly feel thankful that there are such people around."

"She's one of the best instructors I've ever had."

Another serious handicap to the adult education program was the lack of any sort of equipment. Classes met in barren and empty recreation halls scattered all over the camp. The students sat on the floors, on cots that happened to be in the block manager's office, on boxes or on their haunches. No blackboards or paper were available. There were constant conflicts over who was to have which room, and several classes were forced to change their location. The teachers were forced to improvise whenever they could. Lectures were held in empty mess halls and on the ground outside during extremely hot days. In spite of these difficulties, the students and teachers who remained with the department managed. In September, however, when the schools opened and opportunities arose to leave the center, many of the staff resigned.

Thus, we see that in spite of the handicaps, the adult education program carried the brunt of the work until the schools were established.

Nursery Schools

During the middle of June, the Nursery schools opened in Tule Lake. The initial enrollment was 55--divided into two age groups: two and three year-olds and four and five year-olds. Six teachers worked under the supervisor, Miss Marianne Robinson of Mills College. The furniture for the school was made by one of the parents--30 chairs, 6 tables, a slide and a wheelbarrow.⁵ As the camp began to fill, one school was opened in each ward. The last school opened in August in block 71.

The practical purpose served by the schools was the releasing of many women who would otherwise be burdened by the watching of their children. Regardless of whatever idealistically stated purposes in the reports for the W.R.A. about Americanization and the proper training of a child, this seemed to be about the only actual function served.

Many of the youngsters living in the vicinity of the schools attend, although there are many mothers who refuse to leave their children in the hands of young girls. However, there are today over 200 pupils enrolled. There were some complaints from some Nisei mothers;

"Those girls don't know anything. They teach my children bad habits."

"My child never spoke Japanese before he went to nursery school. He's getting more Japanese every day."

The schedule begins 8:15 in the morning with the morning inspection, followed by quiet play until 9. Then there is a creative period of one hour. Toilet room procedure comes from 10 to 10:15 and then the children are fed cracker and cocoa. Singing comes next--sometimes story telling; then comes free play, indoor or outdoor as the weather permits. After lunch there is a nap period until 2:45. This is again followed by toilet and wash period and the eating. Story telling or singing takes place again until 3:45. The day ends after a period of free play.

5. Tulean Dispatch, June 18, 1942.

Among the major problems facing the nursery schools is the lack of adequate personnel. There is only one teacher who has even had child psychology on an elementary level, and most of the teachers are oblivious of the fact that nursery school education is a broad field of study. They do not take seriously Miss Robinson's training program; very few realize that they lack training enough to wish to study. Methods of punishment depend upon the temperament of the instructor rather than psychology. Most teachers seem to be of the opinion that anyone can take care of a child. Many are impatient with the children. Not much favorable comment can be made for the teaching personnel.

Another serious problem is the Japanization of the children of Nisei parents. Some of the children had been reared by Issei and Kibei parents and spoke only Japanese. Although the children who cannot understand English are in a minority, the others are finding it easier to communicate with them by using Japanese. The teachers are apparently not making too much effort to teach the youngsters English; in fact, some of them do not know much English themselves. It seems that the few who speak only Japanese are forcing the others who are either bilingual or English-speaking to speak more and more Japanese. A few of the teachers are concerned about this, but the others do not seem to care. The children play Japanese games and imitate the antics of the Issei more and more. One mother whose child always spoke English complained:

"I'd like to get my children away from that school but I can't. I have so much work to do that I can't watch my children like I should. M_____ has never spoken Japanese before."

Another mother replied to a question on the matter:

"I don't see why the children shouldn't speak Japanese. We're all going to Japan after the war anyway."

Still another mother said:

"If my children learned good Japanese, I wouldn't complain so much. But the Japanese they learn is vulgar--not accepted in Japan."

Equipment was apparently not as serious a problem with the nursery schools as it was with the other departments, but the other problems were more serious. What happens to these children remains to be seen.