

✓ Japanese Out of California

THE REPORT of the Tolan Committee on the problem of evacuating enemy aliens from the Pacific Coast is inadequate and lacking in foresight in some respects, but on the whole the committee's hearings and recommendations have served an excellent purpose. By its mere presence on the Coast during the critical weeks just passed, with sessions in Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and Los Angeles, the committee has forced a studied consideration of the entire problem and has unquestionably checked the hysteria.

The committee's recommendation for the establishment of an adequate federal agency to handle the evacuations—made independently but within a day of the President's order creating the War Relocation Authority for this purpose—confirms the administration in its decision that the matter should be handled on a broader and more humanitarian plane than mere military expediency. Both the recommendation and the actual order stressed the moral obligation of the government to provide suitable work and a sound program of help and guidance, and custodianship of property, for the Japanese and for the others who are being removed from their homes because of military necessity.

The weakest section of the report was that which stressed the differences between the Japanese on one hand, and the Germans and Italians on the other, and offered a justification for different procedures in handling the groups. The committee found "two important differences": the German and Italian groups have lost their "community" identity; they have become absorbed in a greater variety of occupations. It is concluded, therefore, that these groups have become Americanized while the Japanese have not. For the Germans and Italians the committee proposed a policy which might be followed with wisdom for the Japanese as well. This is its recommendation for the crea-

tion of special civilian hearing boards to examine cases on an individual basis, both before and after evacuation. Neither is there any sound reason why this general statement dealing with the status of German and Italian aliens should not apply also to the Japanese:

"Consideration should be given to the various factors that make evacuation an undue hardship and that demonstrate the allegiance of the aliens to their adopted land."

The committee found an alarming tendency on the part of local West Coast officials to "pass the buck" on the Japanese problem. Communities in which the Japanese have lived for years, which they helped to create, of which they were an integral part up to December 7, seemed to feel that they owed the Japanese no further consideration once the army took over. Most of the public officials who testified seemed to be afraid that they might be made the "goats" of some future catastrophe and were obviously haunted by the specters of Admiral Kimmel and General Short. The committee also discovered that popular feeling against the Japanese on the Pacific Coast exists in inverse ratio to the number of resident Japanese. The committee was quick to realize that the problem had not been solved merely because the President, prior to their arrival, had authorized the army to take certain measures for evacuation. They found that no program had been worked out; that the army had only just begun to realize the magnitude of the task it had been assigned; and that the whole question of federal policy was still undetermined.

On March 3 Lieut.-General John L. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, issued a proclamation declaring Washington, Oregon, California and the southern half of Arizona to be military area Number 1. The intention is to remove all Japanese, citizens and

aliens alike, including the American-born, but only German and Italian aliens, and individuals suspected of espionage and sabotage.

Already Japanese have begun to leave the prohibited coastal areas at the rate of approximately 150 to 300 a day. As this is written, no actual evacuation orders have been issued, and it seems unlikely that any such orders will be issued until about May 1, but eventually all Japanese will be ordered out of the area. Two so-called "reception centers" are at present under construction. One is in Owens Valley, California; the other on the Parker Indian Reservation in Arizona. When these centers are completed, approximately 12,000 Japanese will be sent to each camp and others will follow as the first arrivals are interviewed, examined, classified and transferred elsewhere.

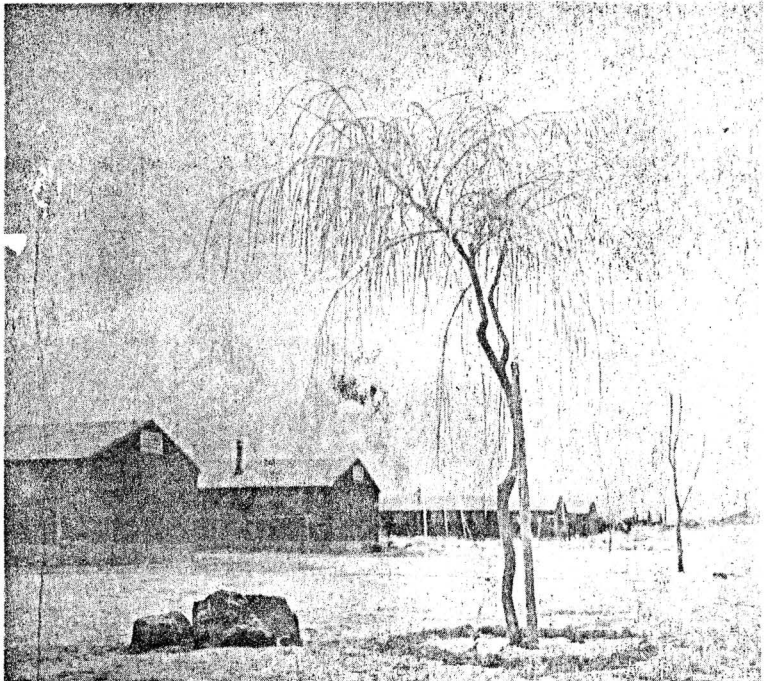
If the administration actually takes the position—as permanent policy—that all Japanese aliens must be evacuated, and possibly interned, then somewhat the same policy would logically follow for German and Italian nationals. Furthermore, if American-born Japanese are to be evacuated en masse, but no such action is taken involving citizens of German or Italian ancestry, then obviously one group of citizens will have been discriminated against solely on the basis of race.

Somehow the feeling exists on the Pacific Coast that it is impossible to distinguish between loyal and disloyal Japanese (citizens and aliens alike), but that it is quite possible to make such a distinction and to apply it through a system of registration and licensing as to German and Italian aliens. If nationality be the test of loyalty, what of the Finns, the Hungarians, the Bulgarians, the Rumanians? Well known German anti-Nazi refugees have told me that they regard certain Austrian and Czech nationals in this country as definitely suspect, particularly Czechs from the former Sudetenland. Yet, at the present time, Czech and Austrian nationals are regarded as friendly aliens, while German anti-Nazi refugees are "enemy aliens." The truth of the matter is, of course, that nationality as such is an utterly unreliable guide in determining friend from foe in this war. So is race. Already there is evidence that this evacuation is being used by the Axis powers as still further "proof" that this is a race war.

It is to be hoped that the Tolson Committee will continue to concern itself with the problem. There is no single domestic issue at the moment of greater importance than the formulation of a policy on "enemy aliens" consistent with our war aims.

Los Angeles

CAREY MCWILLIAMS



Jack Frost caresses with his silvery fingertips the drab and dull environment of Hunt and transforms the barrack walls, the barren trees with a heavy blanket of frost. In the misty winter morning the white and twinkling powder gives the barrack-town an atmosphere of a fairyland, white and unreal.