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SOCIAL REORGANIZATION IN TULE LAKE

Introduction

We have seen that the Japanese in the United States have gone through a long period of social disorganization and that additional problems have arisen after coming to the center. We have seen that the old primary-group controls of rural Japan are no longer able to keep in check the individualistic and hedonistic desires of the Nisei. Under such circumstances a new type of social organization leading to new patterns of behavior better adapted to the changed demands of the individual might be expected to arise. Unless there is to be complete anarchy some type of social control is necessary; men cannot live in peace without common understandings and expectations.

In a large urban society such as we have it seems that some sort of organized control is necessary. It is difficult to say whether such organized control will grow out of the life in Tule Lake. True, in some respects, by the very nature of the W.R.A. undertaking there will be some sort of organization, but whether or not the colonists will accept the organization or reject it is another matter. It may be that the organizational pattern of Tule Lake may be taken as a patch-work scheme to last during the temporary stay in camp. It may be that the new organization will not be a permanent one to be accepted after the end of the war.

We are not concerned in this paper with the major problem of social reorganization in the Nisei world which has rejected the primary group controls of their parents. We are concerned only with the rise of a new social order in Tule Lake, be it temporary or be it an organization that will leave its permanent marks upon the lives of the residents. We shall concern ourselves with conscious efforts at reconstruction, with leadership, with efforts to curb delinquency and Nisei apathy.



## Leadership

It seems that the type of leadership taking over Tule Lake has changed considerably since May. In the Issei world it seems that there was no real leadership until August. Many of the recognized leaders had been apprehended by the F.B.I. and even when they returned to camp they quietly went about in their own way and did not assume any responsibility. The terms of their parol may have had something to do with their attitudes.

In August, the agitators managed to get the attention of the Issei. They focused the attention of the Issei upon certain ills over which the people had been brooding anyway. These individuals were able to oppose many of the moves of the administration.

It was not until the middle of October that some of the more level-headed Issei decided that things were not going too well and that they ought to take a hand in redirecting the efforts of the colonists. About this time the coops got under way under a carefully selected group of men. Some of the men who had been recognized as leaders but who had hitherto not been heard by the Japanese were also called forth. By this time, most of the blocks had settled down and each of the Councilmen and block managers had Issei advisors who managed to get the cooperation of the people.

Among the Nisei--the few Nisei who were interested--there was a struggle for leadership between the Tsukamoto-J.A.C.L. group and the opponents, who were a motley mixture. It was much more than a hangover of an old political struggle, however. It was a struggle between two definite philosophies of leadership.

The general feeling among most J.A.C.L. leaders--openly expressed in Tule Lake by Thomas Yego and Walter Tsukamoto--seems to be that the majority of the Nisei are too stupid to know what is good for them. Therefore, the "enlightened" should lead the "masses" to glory. The feeling is that there is a great danger of "Bolsheviks" swaying the "stupid masses" and thus cause the "great keto" to look with disfavor upon the Japanese minority and then withdraw



certain "privileges" such as civil liberties.

Actually it seems that these men were struggling to maintain their status in the community. Most of the J.A.C.L. leaders had enjoyed considerable prestige in their respective communities on the outside. Their opponents had not dared to speak out against them. These resentments were aired in Tule Lake and the big-wigs were forced to defend their position. Their leadership probably would have meant the continuation of the political graft and patronage that went on in the Assembly Centers such as Puyallup and Wallerger where the J.A.C.L. was given the power by the W.C.C.A. It would probably have meant witch-hunts, red-baiting, resentment, and discontent.

The colonists who had come from Wallerger, however, seemed almost to the man opposed to Tsukamoto and his clique. Liberals on the administrative staff opposed his tactics. Nisei with more militant attitudes toward race-relations also opposed. Perhaps the most powerful element opposing the J.A.C.L., strangely enough, were the Issei who distrusted Tsukamoto because of his close connection with Caucasians! All of these forces joined hands and in the second Councilman's election defeated all J.A.C.L. men with the exception of Thomas Yego.

The new Council was much more democratic in its approach to their problems. Sometimes it was painstakingly slow and never seemed to get anything done. However, the colony as a whole seemed well pleased with the results of the election.

Gradually, it seems that men with axes to grind were dropped by the wayside. Nisei with more democratic views, Issei more concerned with the welfare of the people began to take over the leadership. Thus the leadership changed from the time when common discontent led to a new type of solution--the strike--to the more rational and deliberative type of solution--negotiation. Certain channels for expression began to be accepted.



Conscious Efforts at Reconstruction

The Planning Board of Issai is gradually gaining recognition as a medium for complaints and readjustments. It has a long and twisting history.

Early in July, realizing that discontent was rising in camp, Frank Miyamoto proposed the formation of a Personnel Board to iron out difficulties and to hear complaints. Mr. Shirrell agreed that the suggestion was a good one but did not act upon it. Finally in September when it became obvious to the administrators that all was not well, Mr. Shirrell began asking the Council for an Advisory Committee of some sort. Tsukamoto's group felt that "it should be studied" and tabled the suggestion. Finally, at the suggestion of Mr. Elberson, Yoshimi Shibata drew up the plans for such a Personnel Board. By the time the plans were accepted by the Council, however, it became an all-Issai Planning Board. Elections were held and an impressive array of prominent Issai became members.

Complaints have been heard by the Planning Board and efforts have been made to forestall any trouble. It still remains to be seen whether or not it can become an effective institution for keeping order.

The schools have also tried to take a hand in reconstruction. Many of the classes are oriented around problems of adjustment to camp life. Every effort is being made to integrate the program of the school into the activities of the community. With so many different points of view among the teachers it is difficult to see that the schools would succeed in the effort to form new attitudes suitable for organized control.

Another conscious effort at reconstruction was made by the Cooperatives and their leaders. As might be expected the economic system under which the colonists had lived was no more. True, the medium of exchange was the same, but there were many significant changes. On the economic side, the cooperatives have tried to meet the changed needs of the people.



However, in discussing the coops we must consider one other aim. Some of the leaders envisage a coop-minded Japanese group in the post-war world. They can see no other salvation for a hard-pressed people after the war. With this in mind, they are doing whatever they can to convert enough people to the philosophy of the cooperatives so that they may be able to take the leadership in the hard days to come.

#### Efforts to Curb Delinquency

One of the first outbursts about juvenile delinquency occurred in Block four early in the history of Tule Lake. The women whose daughters were coming home from dances at all hours in the morning became distressed when they heard rumors that the hospital had hundreds of cases of girls asking for abortions. A rousing meeting was held and it was decided that dances would thereafter be held in the blocks and other be allowed to come by invitation only. This proposal seemed impractical and nothing more was done.

Then, the City Council formed a Judiciary Committee to investigate and to try offenders. Several offenders of various kinds came before the committee but nothing seemed to have been done. Heavy punishments could not be meted out.

Concern over crime grew in the colony and in the fall, the Community Forum held an open door discussion on the subject of crime. Various means for dealing with misdemeanors were discussed and the Tulean Dispatch gave the views wide publicity.

Very little was done, however, until December, when the Wardens, the Planning Board, the City Council, the ministers and other public-minded individuals joined forces and decided that something had to be done. Meetings were held in every block; the Issei became aroused. To date nothing has been done.



### Efforts to Combat Nisei Apathy

Nisei apathy to public matters has long been the center of concern among the leaders. It seems that the vast majority of the Nisei, as is the case with the American public as a whole, are ill-informed and disinterested in anything other than the opposite sex, fashions in dress, new dance steps, and new songs. Conversation never rises above the level of the above topics, sports, gossip, and petty talk about friends they know.

The Tulean Dispatch made some effort to arouse Nisei interest through feature articles, editorials, new items. However, since such articles were skipped or did not register when read, they did not have much effect.

The University of California Club--another "intellectual" group to lead the "masses"--made a feeble attempt to arouse the interest in the citizenship and sponsored a mass meeting. The Rally was a dismal failure.

### Concluding Remarks

It is difficult to speak of social reorganization when the Tule Lake colony is yet in its period of initial adjustment. Many of the old and inefficient rules of behavior still prevail although it is recognized that they are ineffective. Many efforts have been made to meet the new situation. It seems, however, that the solutions improvised to meet the new problems have not yet been generally accepted. Various channels new to the Japanese--Councilmen, Planning Board, social welfare work--are being accepted but only as a last resort.

What we have discussed may turn out to be the embryo of new mechanisms of control, but we cannot be too certain. Will the changes necessitated by the camp conditions lead to a permanent social order? Will the life end in total dissolution? Will a temporary adjustment be made only to be discarded at the end of the war? It is difficult to say at present.