

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Few Issei are any longer young enough to ^{participate}/actively in such sports, and this individual expression is perhaps the exception, but some of the factors contributing to the separation of generations even where a common enthusiasm exists is indicated. Another point of interest in this remark is the speaker's reference to the opportunity at Walerga of participating in baseball, which he is unable to do here. The separation of the generations was much less formalized in the assembly center, because of which everyone had to make concessions to everyone else, but also due to the relatively temporary character of the assembly center community. An important problem in the applied sociology of relocation centers is of finding other areas of community life, like baseball, which afford a common basis of participation for all generations, and of keeping the structure of generational relations fluid enough so that absolute dissociation in community activities does not set in.

The separation of the generations tends to be present even in occupational groups. The Japanese employees in the administration building are almost without exception Nisei, except for the janitors and the maintenance crews who are Issei. Office work in general is done by the Nisei because of their ability to speak English, and their greater adaptability. Other fields where the Nisei predominate are the

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

warehouses, transportation, base hospital, post office, recreation, social welfare, fire-fighters, garbage crews, public school and adult education, canteens, newspaper staff, and messhall waiters and waitresses. The Issei are predominantly working as janitors, boilermen, chimney sweeps, messhall cooks and dishwashers, construction crews, and farmers. In the latter two occupational groups, the Issei are intermingled with Nisei and Kibei, but the Issei are unquestionably present in the greatest numbers. In the construction crew, the senior foremen are mostly Kibei or young Issei, but on the farm, the superior positions are almost all in the hands of the older Nisei. The Kibei appear in scattered occupations, such as the construction crew, the farm, and the messhalls, but the one occupation in which they predominate, interestingly enough, is the wardens. By and large, most of the white-collar positions are occupied by Nisei, and they also hold most of the superior positions on the farm, while the Issei, it seems, are delegated to do the "dirty work" of the community. This is perhaps a source of resentment among the Issei, but since they cannot object, due to their lack of qualification for the white-collar positions, their resentment gains expression through the idea that all Nisei are "licking the pants of the whites."

The mounting resentment among the Issei against their subordination expressed itself chiefly through their struggle for political

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

recognition. As has been mentioned previously, the Issei were subordinated under the Nisei and Kibei throughout the initial period in their political status, and the Issei acceptance of this situation is indicated by their failure, in this period, to question the right of the WRA to exclude them from election to the city council. In fact, it was not even thought necessary, on the whole, to elect Kibei councilmen who could bridge the gap between the Issei and the administration better than the Nisei could. Crucial as the point is, it is difficult to explain the mentality of the Issei at this time which led them to accept docilely this authority system in which the Issei role was clearly that of subordinates. An outstanding factor was probably their strong consciousness of their status as "enemy aliens" who could not possess the rights and privileges of citizens during wartime. If this were the case, the Issei must have somehow distinguished the Nisei as different, in status due to their possession of citizenship. The only supporting evidence that can be produced on this point was the often heard remark during the period of evacuation that, "We don't mind so much our being evacuated since we're "enemy aliens" and perhaps can't expect more, but it hurts us to think that our children who are citizens are being evacuated."

By the beginning of July, however, gradual changes in the Issei conception of their rights and privileges were already appearing. A note of disgruntlement is noted on the farm on July 7

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

objecting to the haphazard practices of the Caucasian supervisor in laying irrigation ditches. In the recreation department, there were disagreements between the Issei and Nisei entertainment chairmen about the Fourth of July program, and the matter came to a head immediately after the program in the form of an Issei demand for a separate department with independent authority. Criticisms were appearing, especially among the Issei, about the high price of goods sold at the canteens, and talk was developing of the need for Japanese control of the canteens. Messhall difficulties, disorganization in the administrative offices, slow payment of wages, and a series of other minor difficulties were creating a condition in Tule Lake of widespread dissatisfaction among all members. A deep sense of insecurity arising out of the people's lack of control over their future was apparent by August. In the discussion of all these problems, leadership came rather from the Issei than the Nisei, and except for a few politically-minded persons among them, the Nisei were not inclined to think seriously about community problems. Hence, in the discussion of the problems, it was the Issei view which crystallized out unopposed, and the conviction seemed to appear among them that the existing authorities didn't know how to operate the project efficiently.

Issei authority in the community was first formally evidenced in the block meetings where, because of the absence of Nisei, they had more or less complete control over the councilmen. This condition

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

existed almost from the outset. Also, by the latter part of July, there was a concerted effort to make the cooperative the Issei medium of political, as well as economic, expression, and the success of this movement is evidenced in the pressure by which the city council was brought to divorce itself from the community enterprises. But it was not until the appearance of the issues on the theater project (September 26, 1942) and the overseas broadcast that a showdown struggle between the two generations appeared. The leadership of the Nisei was by then growing impatient with the strongly pro-Japanese expressions that had been appearing in the community, and they rebelled against "acting as messenger boys" in bringing back to the blocks every issue raised at the council meeting, and having to defend the council's action each week against the fury of Issei assault. Although the council voted favorably on both issues, they were voted down by the Issei, and the fact that neither project was undertaken indicates where the authority of the community now lies.

At present the Issei-Nisei relationship is such that the former have essential control over the community, while the latter merely seek escape from the frustrations which they feel when confronted by the immovable force of Issei opinion. The Issei discuss among themselves the eventual victory of the Japanese nation over the United States, but the Nisei who object to these views merely close their ears to the discussion and seldom if ever take issue with

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

the Issei. In this way, the Nisei are constantly called upon to compromise their situation in relation to the Issei; but this raises a question as to what happens in the Nisei psychology in consequence of the frustrations which must confront them.

Concomitantly with the increasing distrust of the Issei for the Nisei, and the latter's general decline in political power, the status of the Kibei has been improved. The Kibei are more and more frequently called upon to represent the views of the Issei to the administration, and one notes that in the recent election of councilmen to the permanent council, there was considerable stress placed in all campaign speeches upon the ability of the candidate to speak Japanese and upon a Kibei background. Moreover, the Kibei in general have by now found some stable position in the community's structure of relationship, and there are fewer incidents of difficulties with the Kibei than was the case in the first few months.

The Bi-Sexual Division

The division of functions and roles between the two sexes is characterized by the usual separations found in the American community, added to which are most of the distinctions found in Japan. Among Issei, the women are more definitely in a subordinate role than among the Nisei, and the relationship between the two is less intimate among Issei than among Nisei. When the dinner bell rings,

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Nisei couples are usually seen walking together to the messhall, sometimes arm in arm, but the Issei husbands and wives seldom go together. Among the latter, either each will seek his individual way to the messhall, or the husband will walk several paces ahead of the wife. Issei husbands are never seen helping their wives with the laundering or ironing, but one does find an occasional Nisei who helps his wife with the laundering. There is no clear division of function about getting coal or buckets of water, though men usually seem to perform these functions when they are about the home. Nor is there any clear-cut division in the task of mopping floors, which are constantly getting dusty and dirty. It seems certain, however, that any tasks which were formerly defined as women's work are more or less strictly performed by the women, although in former communities, where the neighbors did not live so close to one's home, there may have been a greater amount of variation according to the division of labor defined in each home. In other words, the intimacy of community life in this project tends to create a greater conformance to the traditional conceptions of division in function between the men and women.

In former communities where the people lived greater distances from each other, the intimacy of Nisei boys and girls was less questioned, but here where the eyes of the community are all about the project, criticism of Nisei intimacy has become much more concentrated. There are occasional murmurings of disapproval among the Issei against Nisei couples walking arm in arm or of their playing

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

together too intimately. The criticisms of Nisei dances fall into this category, for among Issei the close body to body contact of American social dances is looked upon with moral misapprehension. In the Issei eyes, such external indications of intimacy or affection reveals too much of the inner qualities of individuals and does injury to one of their most sacred sentiments, that one should not reveal too much of one's inner feelings to others. There are, to be sure, certain sanctioned channels for the revelation of one's affection for another, but these are all presumably subtle ones, as through the indirect means of Japanese poems or the glance of the eyes.

Total Organization and Individual Demands

The relocation projects are unique among city governments in the United States in respect to the extent of centralized control of administration. Perhaps nowhere else can one find a community of 15,000 people in which one central agency controls the distribution and preparation of food, the determination of wages, working hours, and working conditions, the distribution of clothing to the individual, the allocation of housing, the operation of enterprises, and even the expenditure of money. The rationing system under wartime conditions begins to approximate the condition in the relocation projects, but even this form of centralized control leaves relatively much more room for individual

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

adjustment than does the social system in the relocation projects. We are here interested in depicting how these extensive formalized controls of the project have channelized the lives of individual evacuees.

The area of the WRA's administrative control is indicated in the policy formulated by the agency at the outset. The WRA, as an agency of the Federal Government, accepts the obligation to:

".... provide the enlistee with a chance to work so that he may earn a living for himself and his family and also contribute to needed national production of agricultural and industrial goods.

The Government also accepts an obligation to see to it that, regardless of the financial success or failure of the project, housing, food, clothing, education, and health service are provided to the enlistee and his family."¹

In other words, the Government had undertaken to provide the "basic needs" of the evacuees in relocation centers, and the people interpreted the policy to mean exactly that. There is no need here to consider how the WRA has administered these various departments, for the discussion is taken up in separate sections. We are here concerned with showing how, once the policy was determined, a social structure crystallized out, and how the people adjusted to the formal structure.

In line with the democratic policy of WRA administration, which was also stated at the outset, there was some talk and enthusiasm in the early stages of the Tule Lake Project about decentralizing the control as rapidly as feasible and of giving

¹ The War Relocation Authority, The War Relocation Work Corps, A Circular of Information for Enlistees and their Families. Washington, D. C., 1942, p. 9.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

the administration over to the evacuees themselves as fast as they could assimilate it. In actual fact, the contrary trend has been the case, of more and more increasing the grip of the administration over the life functions of the evacuees which had been assigned to the WRA.

For example, in the matter of housing, Frank C. Smith, Supervisor of the Employment and Housing Division, spoke enthusiastically of giving each family the size of apartment required for the number involved, of improving the homes with new cast iron stoves and partitions to make small rooms, and of reducing the dust and beautifying the landscape by planting grass and trees.¹ While the conception was noble, it failed to take account of individual demands and individual irresponsibility. One of the first problems encountered was the failure of families to stay in the apartments assigned to them, and much confusion existed because the assignment of presumably empty apartments would frequently reveal some family which had taken independent possession of it. There were frequent expressions of dissatisfaction among the people about the particular apartment or locale in which they were placed, and the administration office was swamped in the initial period with people making demands for changes of apartment. The response of the administration was to establish somewhat more rigid rules about transfers of apartments, especially of independent

¹ Miyamoto Notes, June 16, 1942

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

transfers, and there was some checking by block managers to see that small families or groups of persons had not appropriated large apartments, or that they had not appropriated more than their share of blankets, and cots and mattresses. The difficulties of financing and procuring partitions for rooms within the apartments has led to a hue and cry from the evacuees for partitioning-lumber, until the administration now defensively states the exact conditions under which the partitioning lumber will be provided. Where people have taken the matter into their own hands by "stealing" lumber, the administration has responded by increasing the ^{guards} warden/about lumber piles and of setting penalties for those who are caught stealing lumber. Through a detailed process of action and reaction between the evacuees and the administration, one finds that the minimal control over housing intended by the administration has led to expanded control over its allocation, as well as over areas only indirectly related to the question of housing as such. (The problem of housing distribution has more recently been alleviated by the departure of many families from the project.)

There was, perhaps, something inevitable about the increasing centralized control, or, more correctly, the increased consciousness of centralized control, which has resulted during the career of the Tule Lake Project. In communities on the outside, the responsibility of feeding, clothing, housing, educating and giving medical care to a family rests upon the family head and other responsible members.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

But in this project, the responsibility or "blame" is constantly pushed upward to the highest point of control, which is, as far as the evacuees are concerned, the local WRA administration. As long as the WRA was held responsible, it had to assume the authority proportionate to the responsibility directed to it.

The total organization of the community has relieved the burden of living among many families. Families which, on the outside, had struggled to make ends meet now find themselves provided for in all their basic needs. Not infrequently, one hears the comment that this family or another had been "saved" from financial disaster by the evacuation, and there are indications that persons who had suffered from personal responsibilities on the outside are glad of the circumstance in which they no longer are responsible. The passing of the onus against public assistance, which was especially strong among Japanese previously, likewise indicates a state of mind in which people no longer feel themselves personally responsible for their state of poverty, and can ask for public assistance grants as if they were the people's natural right. The hypothesis may be offered that the irresponsible and vicious criticisms made against the block managers and councilmen in the blocks, and against the WRA in mass meetings, results from the dropping of personal responsibilities in the relocation project and the malicious pleasure which people feel at seeing others suffer the same discomforts they had felt in the past.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

But concomitant with the dropping of the burden, the total organization also gives rise to conditions in which individual feelings of insecurity are increased. The individual person is no longer able to control his personal destiny as he had on the outside. He must trust to the Government for the provision of food and fuel. He cannot direct the kind of food he wishes to eat, or the time at which it is to be eaten. He cannot seek economic opportunities to provide a larger income if he feels that his present wage is inadequate. He cannot pursue his professional ideals in the way he wishes to as long as he is subject to administrative controls from above. Even the hour he is to arise in the morning and the hour he goes to sleep is regimented by the schedule of the entire project. The presence of these feelings of insecurity is expressed over and over in the rumors that appear in the community. The most persistent rumor concerns the possible transfer of Tule Lake people to a more inland region. Another has to do with potential shortages of food. Still others concern the payment of wages, the issue of clothing, and the relocation of a favorite doctor. In every instance, these rumors touch on basic needs of the people, but about which they are unable to do very much. Because of these feelings of insecurity under a structure of total organization, and the distrust they feel of those who are in the central offices, there has been repeated effort among the evacuees to gain greater control over the departments that affect them most basically.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

There arises a question as to how far the total organization may go in exercising authority over individual lives. One of the blocks recently decided that they wished to hold a raffle among the block members, the proceeds from which would go to the purchase of Christmas toys for the children of the block. The matter, however, has had to be taken up with the administration for clearance since a ruling has been passed that there shall be no private soliciting of funds, and the question was raised as to whether such a raffle would fall under the category of private solicitation. The use of the block recreation halls, likewise, has been a frequent source of irritation, for if youngsters are given the free use of these halls, they frequently make use of them far into the night and disturb the neighborhood. Block managers are inclined to the view that the recreation department should exercise more control over the halls, whereas the recreation department feels that it is a matter for the wardens to handle. On the other hand, individual members of blocks also object to the strict control of the recreation halls by the recreation department, for frequent conflicts arise over the question of personal use of the halls for social gatherings and the community activities promoted by the recreation department. On each occasion, arbitration is required to form judgments about the individual cases, and it has been hitherto impossible to designate any set ruling upon the problems.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The consequence of organizing human activities largely on a community-wide basis has been to make people increasingly conscious, not only of their individual and independent interests, but of the effect of individual action upon the total community. Individuals can no longer take a detached view of others' actions for where life is as closely integrated within one system as is the case in Tule Lake, any action on the part of others may rather directly affect one's own life. As one person put it:

"In a community like ours, one can't remain detached from others as one could on the outside. If I didn't think much of the way someone else taught piano on the outside, it didn't affect me personally because everything was competitive and I could merely laugh at others for not teaching their pupils properly. But here, if anyone teaches piano, he's a member of the same organization as other piano teachers. I find that I can't sit back any longer and laugh at others, because if pupils aren't trained properly, it reflects back on the whole group." ¹

¹

Miyamoto Notes, November 31, 1942