

## SUMMARY OF THE CHARTER COMMISSION WORK

Seven months have passed since the Charter Commission of forty members was elected by the residents of this Center last November. The attached draft of the Charter is the fruit of tireless efforts on the part of the Commission whose members met more than a score of times, each time giving serious thought to problems involved in writing a most suitable document for this Center. The draft has been officially approved both by the Project Director and the National Director of the War Relocation Authority at Washington, D.C. The draft Charter will be explained first in detail to the residents at the coming Monday evening, July 5th, block meetings, and then on Wednesday, July 7th, will be submitted for ratification by the center residents. For the benefit of those who desire to familiarize themselves with the Charter in advance, we are pointing out the following pertinent points that had been brought up at the various Commission sessions.

### "Will this be a real self-government?"

The first question raised at the Charter Commission meeting was, whether or not the so-called self-government was really a self-government? "If it is going to be real self-government, then it is OK. If it is going to be a self-government in name only, then, we do not want it." Such opinion was fairly strongly expressed at the Commission meetings at one time. This opinion was especially strong among the Commission's citizen members (Nisei). The finished draft is based fundamentally upon WRA Administrative Instruction No. 34, and, for this reason, the Charter does not specify a true self-government. Rather, it sets up a form of evacuee government through which the residents may help WRA Center administration, and through which they are allowed to voice their opinion on Center management. Hence, in the text, the word Charter, rather than Constitution, was used throughout. It would be well to understand that it is more a sort of general Center rules.

### "Why the concession to the Instruction No. 34?"

Why then did the Commission give up the demand for complete self-government and concede to WRA Administrative Instruction No. 34 and draw up such a Charter as we have here? In connection with this, the following considerations came into our discussions.

Firstly: Within a relocation center where freedom of the residents is restricted, IS IT POSSIBLE to ask for complete self-government?

Secondly: Perchance such complete self-government is granted, IS IT ADVISABLE for the evacuees to fully exercise such right?

Thirdly: The consideration that the Heart Mountain community consists of both the American citizen of Japanese ancestry and the alien Japanese had to be taken into account.

As we all know, question was raised as to the propriety and advisability of evacuees taking part in anything that may even remotely resemble self-government. Doesn't taking part in such a government mean acceptance of the justness of evacuation, and hence, that fact may in itself jeopardize evacuees' position in the post-war readjustment period? After thorough discussion, the Commission came to the conclusion that it is not only impossible to ask for complete self-government, but it is better not to ask for it. In other words, we concluded that it is far better

for the evacuees to leave the final responsibility of the Center management to the WRA staff, while specifying in written documents evacuees' right to have limited voice in the management. If this plan is adopted, neither the citizen nor the non-citizen residents need to fear about jeopardizing their rights. Recent examples of WRA administration receiving the main burden of criticism from certain daily papers directed against the project is ample proof that this conclusion was sound.

"Why not stick to status quo?"

"Why go to the trouble of adopting a Charter at this time? Isn't status quo good enough?" We hear such voices even now. This question, too, was thoroughly gone into. At one time this idea was quite strong among some of the non-citizen members of the Commission. This was due to the following circumstances. According to the original Administrative Instruction No. 34, it was specifically stated that non-citizens were not to be eligible for elective posts in the proposed self-government set-up. "If Issei are to be discriminated against even after coming to a relocation center, then, a Charter that specifically bars Issei from holding elective posts should not be ratified." Such, in fact, was the argument. This problem, however, was satisfactorily solved when WRA amended Instruction No. 34, and made it possible for Issei to enjoy equal rights within the relocation center boundary with the Nisei.

"What are the advantages of adopting a Charter?"

In connection with the question of status quo, another angle must be looked into. Even with written regulations, status quo is hard to maintain long. Without rules to go by, none can exactly state what really is the status quo in a given moment. If we talk about status quo, it is better to put it down in writing. The present draft Charter, as a matter of fact, embodies to a great extent the experiences since last September, and puts down in black and white the existing governmental set-up at Heart Mountain. It may even be said that by adopting the present draft Charter, we are better able to preserve the status quo, in the sense that there will be block representatives who would meet in a body and discuss policy matters with the WRA project staff.

Another advantage in adopting a Charter is that it is easier for the elected officers to work if their duties and functions were specifically defined, and it is easier also for the electors to check and control the actions of their elected representatives. Under certain circumstances it may turn out to be better off without a regulation to go by. But in the case of a community of the size of Heart Mountain, conditions of an Assembly Center period may return at any time, should there be no regulation to go by, and, the residents, formally and legally, are not allowed voice in the management of the center. On the other hand, if Charter is adopted, and thereby Community Council is duly elected, then, residents are legally guaranteed, however limited it may be, a voice in the management of the center.

Finally, our unique preamble to the draft Charter, is in the opinion of many, an attempt on our part to state as clearly as possible our position upon taking part in the proposed evacuee government for Heart Mountain.

Above are important points raised during the sittings of the Charter Commission. Please read carefully the attached text, and if there are any points which needs further clarification, please ask for explanation at your block meeting this coming Monday evening, July 5th.

Coordinating Committee for the Charter Election

June 30, 1943