

Controversial issues in the classroom, January 16, 1943

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Manzanar, California

January 16, 1943

FROM: Sub-committee on Controversial Issues
Secondary Division of Teachers Curriculum Committee
Manzanar Teachers Study Groups

TO: Mr. Ralph Merritt
Project Director
Manzanar War Relocation Area

SUBJECT: Controversial issues in the classroom

At the first meeting of the Secondary Division of the Teachers' Curriculum Committee there was an apparent lack of understanding concerning the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom. A sub-committee was appointed to discuss and clarify the matter with the Administration. Mr. Gibson being present was asked to join the sub-committee.

The following in the report of the sub-committee:

1. The teachers agree with the School Administration that there should be a moratorium on discussion of certain controversial issues and that controversial issues unique to the camp should be avoided as far as possible.
2. In regard to all other controversial issues that naturally arise in a social studies curriculum, the committee feels that its opinion is summarized in the following statement by a nisei:

“Questions on controversial issues should be put out in the open and all available facts presented. The nisei students do not read enough to get facts to help them understand and formulate opinions on these issues. They get a one-sided picture of many of these issues from the older Japanese.”
3. Should the question of evacuation arise, it should be discussed in the light of the WRA bulletin entitled “The teacher and the relocation center.”
4. The committee feels that some discussion of relocation is unavoidable in the classroom, if the school is adequately to prepare these people to take their place in normal community life. The committee further believes that such preparation can be facilitated by gathering all information

bearing on the subject. In this regard it feels that the Administration can be helpful in supplying pertinent information.

5. The committee feels it is highly advisable that Mr. Merritt appear before the teaching staff in order that he may give his reactions to the above recommendations and elaborate on what he considers is good policy in regard to the teaching of controversial issues.

Respectfully submitted:

The Sub-committee on Controversial Issues

cc: Mr. Leon C. High
Dr. Genevieve Carter