

SECRETARY ICKES' MESSAGE TO CENTER RESIDENTS

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December 29, 1944

Secretary Ickes has just issued the following statement for residents of all WRA centers.

"To the great majority of you have been, or soon will be restored the full personal privileges which were yours before military necessity demanded the evacuation. My own reaction to the lifting of the mass exclusion orders is one of deep satisfaction. I am proud that our nation during the progress of a devastating world conflict, can concern itself with the restoration of complete civil liberties to a minority segment of our population.

"I congratulate you upon the recognition you have received as a group and I want to express my heartfelt appreciation of the patience and understanding which the great majority of you have displayed as cooperative and law-abiding residents of relocation centers. Few groups in the population, outside of those in uniform, have made a greater personal sacrifice than you have during the past three years.

"The one-third of your original group who have left the centers have proved to you that opportunity, acceptance and personal satisfaction may be yours in states other than those which were your former homes. More important to you, however, is the fact that these 33,000 men, women, and children have proved to the Nation that they, and you, may be quiet, law-abiding and useful members of a free society when given the opportunity. Still more important to you and to your future is the almost incredible record that your sons and husbands have made fighting for this country on every battlefield of the war. Every thinking man and woman in the United States shares my pride and thankfulness for their bravery and their unstinting sacrifice to home and country.

"The announcement that the centers will of necessity be closed within one year should not be alarming to you, for many reasons. The facilities of the War Relocation Authority and the Department of the Interior will continue to be available to you for that period, and every assistance will be directed toward helping each of you to make a satisfactory resettlement in the community of your choice.

"I hope that the great majority of families in the centers will find it possible to work out acceptable relocation plans during the next few months. I think that your best opportunity will be found while war production activities and employment needs still remain at existing levels. It is my considered judgment that a wider opportunity, for most of you, lies in states east of the Sierra Nevadas, where your friends, and in many instances members of your families, are establishing new and successful homes. But, regardless of where you finally decide to relocate, all of you who leave the centers during the next several months can be assured that the War Relocation Authority will make every reasonable effort to facilitate your transition back to private life"