

ANTHROPOLOGY.—*The relocation of persons of Japanese ancestry in the United States: Some causes and effects.*<sup>1</sup> JOHN F. EMBREE,<sup>2</sup> War Relocation Authority. (Communicated by WILLIAM N. FENTON.)

BACKGROUND OF EVACUATION

In ten new communities from California to Arkansas, there live today 107,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom are American citizens. These people

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were all evacuated from the West Coast as a result of the war and are now living under conditions of "protective custody." This situation presents a number of important problems both political and sociological. Politically, most of the issues of war and of the peace to follow are bound up in these "relocation centers." For instance, is the United States fighting a racial war as Japan

claims, or is she fighting an ideological war; if administrative problems involving a hundred thousand people can not be intelligently and democratically solved, how are we to solve the complex postwar problems of, say, Southeast Asia with its mixed population of a hundred million? Sociologically, some of the important problems raised by the situation are the social effects on the people who have been relocated. How are these people living? What have evacuation and life in relocation centers done to the social organization and set of social sanctions that had grown up in the Japanese communities on the West Coast?

In order to gain some understanding of present attitudes and social developments, it is necessary to look briefly at the history of the people since December 7, 1941. The first effect of Pearl Harbor on the Japanese population in California was one of shock. The stunning effect was even greater for the resident Japanese than for the rest of the West Coast population. This was the beginning of the much-talked-of, much-feared war between the land of their parents and the land of their children.

When nothing drastic happened after the initial internment of a number of Japanese by the intelligence agencies, people relaxed somewhat and went about their business. It looked as if nothing further would occur as long as the people of Japanese ancestry remained law-abiding and did their bit in the war effort by buying war bonds and volunteering to join the Army.

Then things gradually began to happen. Civil Service dropped Japanese-Americans from its rolls, and the Army ceased to accept Japanese-American volunteers. To the *nisei*, as Japanese-American citizens are called, these were bitter pills to swallow. Then rumors from Hawaii of sabotage and fifth-column activity began to drift into California via returning Navy wives and others. In spite of the fact that these rumors were specifically branded as untrue by national intelligence agencies operating in Hawaii, they gained wide currency on the West Coast and added to the fears of the people both military and civilian—fears that what was said to have happened in

Hawaii could happen all up and down the West Coast. Newspaper columnists such as Pegler and McLemore began to beat the drum for internment of all Japanese regardless of citizenship. McLemore, for instance, wrote, "Let us have no patience with the enemy or with anyone whose veins carry his blood,"<sup>3</sup> and Pegler shouted, "To hell with habeas corpus!"<sup>4</sup> Economic interest groups and professional anti-Oriental groups realized that in this situation there was a golden opportunity for carrying out some of their rather undemocratic policies.

Finally and decisively, the Army became worried by Japanese victories in the Pacific and by the rising tension in California. They asked for the right to move people as they saw fit from vital West Coast areas. On February 19, 1942, the President issued an Executive Order authorizing General Dewitt, as Commander of the Western Defense Command Area, to move any persons or groups of people as he felt necessary to protect the military security of the area.

On March 2, a restricted area was delineated from which all persons of Japanese ancestry, regardless of citizenship or past behavior, were to be evacuated. By March 29, 8,000 persons had "voluntarily" moved eastward. As might have been predicted, opposition arose in the inter-mountain States to any mass migration into their territory, and finally it became impracticable for any further movement of this sort. Consequently the voluntary migration was called to a halt, and it became necessary to provide some sort of Federal control and protection.

The War Relocation Authority, which had been established on March 18, 1942, to assist évacués financially or otherwise in their movement eastward, was now faced with the problem of having to establish areas where the people could go and live until the crisis was passed. Thus came into existence the relocation centers, not as a part of any original plan to detain all the people, but rather as a practical expedient made necessary as a result of the war emergency. It was necessary in locating sites for

<sup>3</sup> Column of January 29, 1942.

<sup>4</sup> February 16, 1942.

and establishing relocation centers to enter into agreements, not only with the Army in regard to internal security, but also with the governors of the States concerned. Since all this took time it was necessary to establish in the meantime a number of temporary "assembly centers" in various parts of California, Washington, and Oregon. These assembly centers were run by the Wartime Civil Control Administration, a branch of the Army. Being largely made-over parks or race tracks, they were not intended originally for housing large numbers of people; and even in this emergency period it was not intended that they house people very long. However, they functioned for several months, and the living conditions within them have had serious effects on the people concerned.

The people, workers, business men, college students, priests—all were herded together in what they regarded as degrading conditions and humiliated by being penned behind fences and guarded by military guards. A deep sense of shame was created by the circumstances of induction to these centers. The long uncertain waiting period, during which people had little opportunity or incentive for reorganizing community life, had a demoralizing effect.

The relocation centers were long in building, owing to problems of location and priorities, and most of them were incomplete when trainloads of 500 évacués at a time came into them. The trip was by coach, usually during very hot weather. On arrival the évacués, hot, tired, and worried, went through "intake" where a nurse looked at each throat and someone else took down names and assigned housing space without much attention to the needs and desires of the people to be housed. The housing was inadequate at first and meals were disorganized. The centers were guarded by military police, and later barbed-wire fences were built.

#### EFFECTS OF RELOCATION CENTER LIFE

*Halting of the assimilation process.*—Each center houses 6,000 to 17,000 people, all of Japanese ancestry. In fact, this ancestry is the only thing in common to the whole

group. Many individuals who had formerly lived in non-Japanese communities in California felt very strange in this all-Japanese community. There is the now familiar story of the child who after a few days in a center said to her mother, "Let's go home now. I don't like it in Japan." One of the effects of this situation was the increase in the use of Japanese language and also an increase of the influence of older Japanese. In California, before the war, young Americans 18 to 20 years old were gradually becoming independent of their parents and following American patterns of life. In the relocation centers the only older people to guide them were the Japanese, and because of the breakdown of various social and community organizations the average person was thrown back to a greater dependency on his family as the only stable group left.

*Effects of housing conditions.*—Housing in the centers consists of army-type barracks divided into four or five rooms or "apartments." These structures were made by the Army and are more suitable for housing single men than for housing families. Owing to overcrowding in many centers, members of more than one family are frequently housed in one room. Toilet and bathing facilities are in a separate structure, in each block of 12 barracks. In both the wash rooms and the apartments there was at first no provision whatever for privacy. Eating was in mess halls, one for each block of barracks. There is no special provision for family eating, so that individuals sit down more or less as they arrive in the mess hall. Parents have been worried by the effect of this type of eating on the manners of their children. The whole housing situation has had a demoralizing effect on family standards of living and on family controls over children's behavior.

*Anxieties.*—As a result of evacuation a great many anxieties afflict the people living in relocation centers. They are worried as to the effect of relocation on their children; they are worried as to their future and the future of their children in the United States. Fears in regard to food, in regard to citizenship rights, in regard to all sorts of things both large and small are prevalent. This

feeling of insecurity is reflected in numerous alarmist rumors—rumors that they will be left and forgotten in the desert, contrary rumors that they will be moved again to another center, rumors that there is not enough food in the storehouse for more than 24 hours, rumors that the hospital facilities are dangerously inadequate.

*Breakdown of community controls.*—Because of the fact that people in the centers come from various social and economic backgrounds and owing to the disorganizing effects of evacuation and assembly center life, most of the usual community controls on behavior are lacking. There has been a breakdown, for instance, of the economic position of fathers as heads of the family. Some of the results of this loss of community solidarity and control over its individuals are to be seen in the growth of truancy among the children. Delinquency of various sorts and other antisocial conditions are in striking contrast to the usual law-abiding well-regulated manner of living of the Japanese of California before the war. For instance, there was no provision for the making of furniture, with the result that it became necessary for individuals to pick up scrap lumber wherever they could find it. People who never would have thought of such petty thievery before relocation were forced into it by circumstances of center life. Another element in this situation is a lack of motivation for doing things that one does in a normal community. Why work for \$16 a month? Why study in a barracks school with no future ahead of one?

*Family dependency.*—Most of the familiar sources of social security have been lost—the neighborhood group, the occupational group, business or farm, and home. One result of this has been an increased dependency on the family as the only stable unit left. Many *nisei* who before the war were drifting away from their parents and entering other social groups now put great store by family unity—so much so that many are reluctant to leave the center if a job is available because it would mean separation of the family.

*Magnification of minor issues.*—Owing to the restricted conditions of living behind

barbed-wire fences and under the control of an administration whose acts often appear arbitrary, many things that in an ordinary community would cause little comment often become magnified in importance. As already mentioned, rumors are very common, most of them of an alarmist nature. Numerous small and violently antagonistic cliques have grown up within the centers. Lengthy discussion and argument over what in normal life would be regarded as inconsequential is typical.<sup>5</sup>

*Developments of caste attitudes.*—Practically all the *évacués* are of Japanese ancestry, while the Government officials are Caucasian. The administration has better eating and housing facilities, and members of the administrative staff have much greater social security than have the evacuees. Such a social situation where one racial group does the administering and another is administered leads inevitably to a caste distinction.

*Disillusionment in American democracy.*—Most of the younger *évacués* have been brought up in American schools and indoctrinated in the ideals of American democracy, which teaches, among other things, that racial discrimination is undemocratic. To many of these people the evacuation from the West Coast was a shocking contradiction on the part of the Government of this basic teaching. The fact that no distinction was made even for war veterans or families with sons in the United States Army led to the embitterment of many people. One man, for instance, who was a veteran of the last war and who was formerly a very patriotic American citizen gradually got to brooding over his treatment as a result of the evacuation order and eventually became the leader of an anti-American group.

*Wardship.*—People in the centers are provided with food and shelter, however inadequate they may be. They are also relieved of all responsibility for making decisions affecting the community, since these decisions are made by the Government. As

<sup>5</sup> Similar social conditions are typical of the internment camp for British and Americans in Hong Kong. See Alsop's articles in the Saturday Evening Post for January, 9 and 16, 1943.

a result there is beginning to grow up an attitude of dependency on the Government, a loss of individual initiative on the part of some individuals. The centers also represent security in contrast to the insecurity of the outside world. This is perhaps one of the most significant developments of life in the centers, because it means that many of the people now in the centers may never leave regardless of what opportunities may be offered to them. It is easier to sit back and let someone else provide the food and shelter and make the decisions than to undertake the burden of life in a competitive society.

#### PRESENT POLICY OF WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

The War Relocation Authority came into the picture of evacuation shortly after the original evacuation order. The original plan of the Authority was to assist persons excluded from certain areas in finding work and to provide food and shelter for those who could not. The work was not (and is not) restricted to persons of Japanese ancestry. However, as is indicated in the first

part of this paper, the relocation centers for Japanese came into existence through a number of unforeseen factors. Since last summer, however, the Authority has been concerned with the problem of how to get people out of the centers and back into American life. In this connection, a number of specific things have been done. Last October a special leave policy was developed whereby individuals could apply for leave from the center if they had a job or some other means of support. In February, 1943, the Army reopened its ranks to a limited number of Japanese-Americans.

In connection with the general policy of resettlement now of primary concern to the Authority, there are a number of special problems that are rather difficult to overcome. American public opinion does not always distinguish between our Japanese enemies in the Pacific and the Japanese-American minority group in this country. The growth of wardship and institutionalization in the relocation center residents themselves is another factor that tends to perpetuate the existence of centers.