

QUARTERLY REPORT

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HEART MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT

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1. SPECIAL CONDITIONS OF COMMUNITY LIFE.

Certain special conditions of community life affected the development of community government. The split, bi-lingual community divided between Issei and Nisei, all of whom were more or less resentful of the hardships and unfairnesses of evacuation and disillusioned with democracy, made a difficult ground for the development of self-government. The evacuee community had developed in Assembly Centers two major tactics of self-protection against injustices: direct and indirect resistance to the administration, taking the forms of beatings of suspected "stooges," riots, etc. and passive resistance, taking the form of non-cooperation. A general suspicion as to the sincerity of the government in view of what was regarded as broken promises during the period of evacuation resulted in antagonism toward those who did cooperate with the administration. A small, inexperienced administrative staff, lacking a knowledge of the dominant language of the people and with a defensive psychology early developed a tendency to counteract evacuee resistancy by arbitrary action.

Two other factors not particularly related to evacuation also discouraged an effective self-government. The majority of responsible Nisei and some of the Issei shrunk from political responsibility because of fear of its bad effect on their economic future. This, of course, is the same motivation as that of the average American business man who refrains from too active concern over political matters: he fears to make enemies. There was also a carry-over into the Relocation Center life of the dominance of the Issei over Nisei in the former Japanese communities.

One major factor favored development of the democratic process: the artificial economic equality in the Centers and absence of economic competition.

III. ELEMENTS OF HEART MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT

Most of the elements of community government were established during the month of September in the previous quarter. The Charter Commission was the only new development in this quarter.

The following outline will serve as a guide and reminder preliminary to the general discussion of community government at Heart Mountain.

A. WRA Administration.

1. retains all final authority in theory.
2. In practice has consulted Block Chairmen and received approval on every administrative action. Very important policies have also been submitted to Block Administrative Officers for approval.
3. Has, through Chief of Community Services, kept close contact with proceedings of Block Chairmen and Block Administrative Officers.

B. Council of Block Chairmen.

1. Issei in fact but not restricted to Issei in theory.
2. Chief role--to act as shock absorber in problems involving evacuees and administration.

Examples:

- a. Mess disputes
 - b. Coal unloading problem
 - c. Sugar beet employment
 - d. Police situation
 - e. Clothing problems
3. A channel for communication between evacuees and administration and vice versa.
 4. Frequently working as much as sixty hours a week without pay. Only a small proportion of this time spent in Council meetings. Personal contact maintained with all evacuees in their blocks (about 500 persons) to settle problems and maintain peace.

C. Block Meetings ("Town Hall Meetings")

1. Held every Monday night in each block under Block Chairmen.
2. Attendance varies from 15 to 400, depending on block issues. (Average about 80).
3. Serve as link in communication between administration and evacuees and vice versa.
4. Important as a safety valve.
5. Backs Block Chairmen in dealings with administration and keeps Block Chairmen truly representative of point of view of evacuees.

D. Block Committees (Elected at Block Meetings)

1. Vary from block to block, type selected by block.

Type a.

4 Committeemen (1 to each 6 barracks) serving as advisers and consultants to Block Chairmen on all matters from economic to political.

Type b.

Committee of barrack heads--24 committeemen to each block. Function same as above, but each individual less important.

Type c.

Special committees (3 or 4 evacuees to each committee) such as mess, welfare, recreation, etc.

Block Committee of whatever type are essential links in the communication system between the administration and evacuees.

E. Block Administrative Officers

1. Nominated by block, "appointed" by administration.
2. Nisei in fact though not limited to Nisei in theory.
3. Nominal duties--those of Block Managers.
4. Are regarded by Community as representative of Nisei in the Center and encouraged in political development by Chief of Community Services through round table discussions of evacuee problems and theory of community government.
5. Important policies submitted to Block Administrative Officers by administration as well as to the Council of Block Chairmen.
6. Developing tendency of Block Chairmen to work with Block

Administrative Officers through joint committees on community problems and joint sessions. Initiative for this joint operation largely from Issei.

Note:

Election of a Charter Commission in November containing over half of the Block Administrative Officers tended to eliminate need for political discussion. Near end of quarter, Block Administrative Officers were transferred to supervision of Assistant Director, re-christened Block Managers, and cut off from all political activity. This was possible because of belief of Block Administrative officers that adoption of Charter was imminent, and that a majority of them would be elected to the new all-Nisei Council.

F. Judicial Commission.

1. Seven Commissioners and two alternates selected by Temporary Council of Block Chairmen and ratified by vote of community (Vote 10 to 1 for ratification.)
2. Court held in converted Recreation Hall, properly equipped as a courtroom. Dignified formal procedure.
3. Court has handled all misdemeanors including fights between evacuees.
4. The participation of outstanding community leaders in self-government as Judicial Commissioners has strengthened Council's position and minimized non-cooperation.

G. Charter Commission.

1. Composed of 40 members, 1 Nisei and 1 Issei to each block.
2. Candidates were nominated by petition. Election by written ballots at polling places in blocks supervised by Block Election Boards. (Registration of voters preceded elections.) Registered voters, 3500,--voting in elections, 2700.
3. The Charter Commission organized itself into 8 study committees and an executive committee of 12 to do actual writing of charter.
4. About half of elected Charter Commissioners were Block Chairmen and Block Administrative Officers, and much political discussion was transferred from Temporary Council and meetings of Block Administrative Officers to Charter Commission meetings.
5. By end of quarter, Charter had not been drafted due to lack of agreement on provision for Issei participation.

III. FUNCTION OF HEART MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT

The effectiveness of the Block Chairmen in settling the mess hall difficulty at the end of September as mentioned in the previous quarterly has contributed greatly to their prestige in the community. It was fortunate that this precedent was established before the adjustment period of October and November. A succession of problems rose to challenge the new community. Any one of these problems might have developed into "incidents" except for their handling by the Block Chairmen. The technique used was simple. Problems originating among the evacuees such as the clothing problem and the Police situation were immediately brought to the attention of the Administration by the Block Chairmen. After discussion as to causes of the difficulty, agreement would be reached as to a solution. This

was promptly transmitted to the entire community by the Block Chairmen through block meetings and through word of mouth. The Chairmen were assisted by the Block Committees. Exactly the same process was followed in regard to problems originating with the administration, such as the unloading of coal, collection of garbage, and recruiting of sugar beet workers. These cases were promptly brought to the Block Chairmen and the proper action decided upon. This discussion was carried to the community by the Block Chairmen through the block meetings and with the aid of the Block Committees. It is worth noting that the Chairmen of the Block (Committees,) although men of years and dignified position in the community unhesitatingly tackles actual work in order to set examples for the community. Thus, during the crucial period of the coal situation, a considerable number of the Chairmen turned out and worked with the coal crew without compensation until (an example had dignified the work) the crisis was passed. The action was the cause of some criticism from the community, but the example was accepted. The Chairmen took active responsibility for law and order in the community during the Police situation and on occasions have personally guarded government property such as the high school lumber pile.

It is doubted whether any younger group no matter how capable could have absorbed the emotional shock of the adjustment period as did these elders of the community. It should be stressed that they retained their position of leadership not solely because of their previous standing but because they subjected themselves to the criticism and suggestions of the block residents each Monday night at the block meetings.

The block meetings were originally suggested by the Nisei as a guarantee of preservation of democratic control. However, it was mainly Issei who utilized them, for they welcomed the opportunity of expressing, criticising, and blowing off resentments; and were guided by the constructive chairmanship of the Block Chairmen. They gradually learned to express constructive ideas rather than destructive. As far as can be determined, no "secret" meetings of Issei have been held, such as were common at Assembly Centers. The open expression of opinion at block meetings has been a more than satisfactory substitute. In no case has a Block Chairman allowed a block meeting to take on a rabble-rousing aspect.

Much pent-up desire for action was expressed in each block through Block Committees and their work. The more politically restless blocks have canalized their activities into vigorous work for the welfare of the block, first of all through the color-texing of all apartments and then in the form of voluntary fire brigades, recreational programs for children, welfare activities, block parties, etc. A factor in maintaining peace in the community was the close cooperation developed in a latter part of the quarter (after the termination of Chief of Internal Security, Griffin) between the Welfare Department, the Police Department, the Chairman of the Judicial Commission and the Block Chairmen. Potential irritations or trouble patterns were made the subject of informal discussions. The action decided upon to remove the cause of difficulty was usually executed by the Recreation or Welfare

Departments, with the advice of the Chief of Police and Chief Judicial Commissioner.

A notable example was the control of the man boys' and young men's gangs, inherited from the Assembly Centers and in some cases from communities preceeding the Assembly Center. By the end of the quarter almost every gang had been transformed into a properly supervised boy's club with a healthy program.

While the conditions upon which this experiment in democracy were developed were extremely unfavorable as has been noted, a complete, self expressive pattern of community government is emerging. Everyone in the community is proud that there has been no case of a beating or riot or inciting to riot or proven threat. To quote a member of the Council, "Heart Mountain is a civilized community. We have outlawed barbaric methods of settling disputes."