

PROPOSED CONFERENCE OF NINE RELOCATION CENTERS
Evacuees' Future at Stake!

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Apathy, if not direct opposition, is indicated in certain quarters toward the proposed conference of nine relocation centers. A misunderstanding as to the purpose of this conference is to be blamed for such attitude. As far as I can determine, the chief objection is voiced as follows: "The conference is called by the W.R.A. in order to devise ways and means of expediting the W.R.A. relocation policy which was handed down to us arbitrarily." This voice argues farther, "Since the meeting is called to facilitate the W.R.A. policy, the expenses should be borne by the sponsor. Otherwise, we need not send any delegate."

The owners of such voice are usually persons who have not as yet recovered from the original indignations of evacuation and still carry "chips" on their shoulders. They have not as yet fully discovered that W.R.A. is the agency to serve evacuees and its aim is identical with the interest and welfare of the people. However, W.R.A. is not without fault, for it created among certain quarters a suspicion and sometimes resentment by arbitrary handling of many problems. So far, all W.R.A. policies were "handed down" to us. Relocation is the all-important problem to every evacuee with his future at stake. Yet relocation policies were formulated by Washington officials without any consultation of evacuees. I am not discussing the merit or demerit of these policies, but merely stating that the method employed in arriving at these policies was not democratic, but dictatorial. Therein lies the chief cause for suspicion and resentment.

However, the W.R.A. is not deaf to any constructive suggestions. And we sensed recently a marked tendency on the part of W.R.A. officials desiring greater evacuee participation on all matters affecting their welfare. Therefore, the Heart Mountain Community Council believes the time is ripe to call a conference of evacuee representatives with W.R.A. officials to discuss various matters of the center and to formulate or modify the policy regarding relocation. To avoid misunderstanding, it should be borne in mind that we, not the W.R.A., were the ones who originated the idea of the conference.

Now let us turn our discussion to the purposes of this conference. Although the meeting is proposed primarily to discuss relocation, we are not forbidden to discuss any other matters concerning us. This conference will be the first real opportunity the centers have had individually and jointly to air their grievances and to express their opinions in the presence of the head of the W.R.A. Such an opportunity must not be passed up. Many centers problems can be discussed for our mutual benefit. A federation of nine centers may be proposed to foster a solidarity among evacuees to unify our common interests, and to afford us a clearing house for exchange of information and ideas among all centers.

The most important job to be accomplished is the formulation of an over-all policy for our rehabilitation. The present W.R.A. policy of relocating evacuees on job basis is good as far as it goes. But, as facts indicate, the rehabilitation via this method touches only certain percentages and is impractical and even impossible for the largest percentage of evacuees.

The recent announcement of selective service again puts a different slant on the whole relocation problem. From the standpoint of public relations, this is important news to Nisei, but from the relocation point of view, a complete collapse of the present relocation policy seems imminent.

A man awaiting his induction will no longer be interested in relocation. Aged parents who are planning to go out when their son establishes himself in suitable employment will be forced to abandon their plan, for the breadwinner will almost surely be inducted.

A successful relocation can only be accomplished in family groups. Many plans for group relocation on farms are being advocated by various people. At the coming confab these plans should be scrutinized carefully. Many worthwhile suggestions are likely to come out. We may be able to formulate a master plan by which farm relocation may be facilitated.

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Various means of helping independent business men should also be reviewed. In conjunction with the existing W.R.A. field offices in various cities, a department devoted to business survey should be created. Among the evacuees there are many business men who have had experience in dealing with Caucasian patrons. A very large number of the people were engaged in hotel, grocery, dry cleaning, restaurant and other businesses and were catering to the American public. If proper survey is made and information imparted as to the various business opportunities in various relocation areas, many business men may be helped to relocate.

A certain percentage of evacuees will not be able to relocate under any plan for the duration. Certainly the agenda should include a discussion of the ways and means of rehabilitation for this group.

The average age of issei is said to be sixty. It is too much to ask a person of sixty to rehabilitate himself in a strange community with the handicap of language and with the status of enemy alien. Realization of these facts are essential in planning their rehabilitation program.

The January 1st issue of the Saturday Evening Post gives an interesting account of a project undertaken by the State of Vermont in rehabilitating wounded soldiers and handicapped people. Arts and handicrafts are the means employed. A remarkable success is reported, which gives us an idea that a similar project might be undertaken at our centers.

It is an accepted fact that the Japanese are naturally artistic and very skillful with their hands. Arts and handicrafts may be the God-given answer. The prospect of starting such a project in the centers is not unlikely if we obtain the cooperation of the W.R.A. I believe there are almost unlimited demands on the market for handicraft products. After the war, it may be developed into a larger field of manufacturing.

I believe that farming and manufacturing have the greatest possibilities for the future of our people. The racial feeling will always exist; the anti-sentiments cannot be changed radically even after the return of peace. In farming and manufacturing, the evacuee need not come in direct contact with the public; his chief concern is to produce the best possible product at the cheapest possible price.

If the past experiences are to be used as a criterion, our future will not be bright as employees. The racial characteristics will invariably work a handicap in getting promotion. With the signing of peace treaties, millions of ex-soldiers and defense workers will be hunting jobs. We will be the first ones to be discharged when such time comes. Of course, there will be certain exceptions, but generally speaking, our future prospect as employees is very black indeed. I do not wish to be a pessimist. But we must be realistic in planning our future.

As far as I can see, the only possibility for a minority group which is more or less ostracized lies in independent undertaking, such as farming and manufacturing as mentioned before.

It is needless to say that the independent undertakings require backing of capital. As \$16.00-a-month wage earners, we are not even qualified to talk about financing. However, if we are to make a long-range plan of our future, financing should occupy an important place in such a plan. And even under the present circumstances, I see a possibility of starting our own financial institution.

All centers have consumer cooperative businesses which are markedly successful. In Heart Mountain last year, the net earning was slightly over \$100,000.00. The aggregate net earning of all the center co-ops would amount to around a million dollars a year. These earnings are now being returned to the consumers as patronage refunds. A way could be devised to set aside certain portion of this money for the establishment of our own bank to finance our own rehabilitation.

Many people talk about possible reparation on damages incurred by the evacuation. Some hinge their entire hopes on possible government assistance. We may be able to get reparation at the end of the war. If there is a legal basis for demand

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ing such reparation, we should plan proper legal steps at this conference. But we cannot plan our future on such uncertainties as reparation or government aid.

I am a firm believer in the axiom, "Heaven helps those who help themselves." Our plan of rehabilitation must be based on this principle.

Now let us summarize the foregoing points in outline form which may be used as tentative agenda:

1. The center problems
2. Review and discussion on present policy of relocation on "job basis".
3. Family and group relocations
4. Ways and means of assisting business men for relocation
5. The rehabilitation of the people who are unable to relocate.
6. Arts and handicrafts as possible means of rehabilitation.
7. General policy as to the future of Japanese in United States.
8. Establishment of financial institution.
9. Establishment of Federation of Nine Relocation Centers.

Any one of the above topics is important enough to call a conference, but I am aware of the limitations of a conference, and we cannot possibly find answers to all the problems. The conference will be a success even if we are able to take but one single step in the right direction.

The problems to be discussed are our own. Our future is at stake. The matter of who pays the expense is insignificant in comparison with the purpose. Every vacuue should support this conference without reservation.

Thomas T. Sashihara
Chairman
Heart Mountain Community Council

RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION

There is a need of an instruction granting pullman service for those who require it, the recommendation of the Chief Medical Officer or the Social Welfare section being a requisite for granting of such services. In all government movement of evacuees, such as evacuation, segregation, intra-center transfers, the necessity of pullman cases has been recognized and granted. In our estimation, relocation is the most important of these moves, and every effort and consideration that have been expended in making other moves should be applied to relocation moves.

II

FREIGHT

We recommend the elimination of the 500-lb. limit on property to be shipped at WRA expense from relocation centers. An inconsistency occurs in the policy of the WRA property office in paying transportation of unlimited amounts of property from storage on the Pacific Coast and limiting to 500-lbs. the amount of freight to be shipped from a center. A great number of families have the majority of their belongings in their possession at the centers, and to limit them to 500 lbs. places too great a financial burden on them; in many cases the additional expense that would be entailed to ship their freight might be a positive hinderance to relocation. We believe that a relocatee should be entitled to one free movement of all his property, regardless of wherever it may be stored.

III

AID RENDERED FOR GROUP RELOCATION

Evacuees on investigation tours of sites for prospective group relocation ought to be financially helped. There are many groups that are thinking of relocation to some area as a group in an agricultural community. Some of these groups consist mostly of Issos who are not adapted to any other type of work. The fact that they are of the older group will tend to make them hold on to their resources and not diminish them by such ventures as investigation. Investigation by competent evacuees as to possibilities and opportunities should be given assistance by the WRA.

Of course, we may be misled to think this is a cure-all to solve our relocation problems or that this assistance might be misused; but we firmly believe that this is one course that offers a positive plan and hope to a great many families for a group relocation, and is conducive for many small groups to be organized and begin their planning for permanent resettlement immediately.

IV

LOANS FOR FAMILY HEADS OR SOME ASSURANCE OF FINANCIAL AID IN CASE OF FAILURE

This seems obvious. Some other means to secure loans from other government agencies ought to be expedited and developed. There are many families who hesitate to relocate because they fear failure to make a "go of it". Some assurance of financial aid would counteract this feeling. However, there are very few actual cases where such failure occurs so there is all the more reason that this assurance be given.

CHANGE IN WRA POLICY IN FIELD OFFICES IN REGARD TO ATTITUDE TO EVACUEES

A. According to letters received, this is where WRA has really fallen down. It seems that the Field Offices have been "brushing off" the evacuees who go to them not so much for financial aid but for advice, particularly the first few weeks. No doubt, the offices are pretty busy, but the overwhelming number of complaints indicate that the attitude of WRA has been that of "well, you're relocated so you have no tie with WRA, we have enough to worry about."

It seems there is no cooperation at all between the center and the field offices. The field office doesn't seem to have a true picture of the composition of the center including the people, the type of work they can do, and other pertinent matters. In short, there should be integration of the two.

B. WRA Field Office to be Responsible for the Evacuee when He arrives in the Territory.

WRA should help do the work the Hostel has been doing--help the evacuee during the "initiation" period.

WRA Field Office should tell the evacuee just how much and in what way the WRA Field Office can help him--and should do it.

More Leniency by Western Defense Command in Allowing Nisei to visit the Coast to get Personal Belongings and Straighten Out Business Affairs.

This is self-explanatory. Many families who left their furnishings and belongings stored in their homes and in private storage would like to send a member of their family to their former home to acquire necessary items--to attempt to buy them after relocation would be so expensive as to be prohibitory--if these items are available at all.

Again, there are many evacuees who have unfinished business to straighten out which was caused by the rush of evacuation period.

VII
Simplification of Traveling for All Evacuees

This refers to enemy aliens--issei. Some provision should be made so they would be classified as friendly alien so that the travel restriction should be lifted or at least simplified.

VIII

Ranch or Real Estate Opportunities

Jobs which are "advertised" in the center bulletin are primarily directed at Nisei and Issei with domestic experience. Many families with farming experience might be induced to relocate if more such offers were included.

Some provision should be made for financial aid through banks or some federal agency for farmers and other groups. This is most important because there are family heads who would not be able to support their families just by working for someone else--he must go into business.

IX

Evacuee Participation in Field Areas of WRA

WRA Field Offices ought to have on their staff an evacuee member who is qualified as well as acceptable to evacuees themselves to provide evacuee "angles" in all the field office planning of relocation programs. There is nothing like an exhibit A, such would be an evacuee staff member, to sell to the public what evacuees are like. Greater confidence and effective programing would be stimulated by such an arrangement.

X

Coordination of Relocation Planning--Public Relation

Washington ought to channel to Centers an integrated program of public relation materials that can be used immediately so that the residents of the Centers can be kept up-to-date on what work voluntary organizations are doing on the outside. This educational program will enormously build up resident evacuee morale so that even personal relocation plan might be considered and planned immediately. Also, a positive public relation program on what Niseis are doing now should be at once initiated. We need a vigorous and positive propaganda news bureau to coordinate the good work of the voluntary groups that have been working alone and unassisted. We want both the public and evacuee to know that we are doing our part as loyal Americans in this world crisis.