

LEAVE PROCEDURE AND RELOCATION

LEAVE PROCEDURE

During the period of somewhat over a year since the start of the evacuation program, there has been a gratifying trend in WRA policy away, insofar as has been possible, from the many restrictions and losses of civil rights, toward a restoration of many of these same rights.

The first manifestation of this general trend was in the inauguration of a leave policy which permitted qualified and properly investigated individuals to leave the Relocation Centers. The initial emphasis was placed on Student Leave, which meant that many who were anxious to resume their normal place in civil life, left the Relocation Center as students, even though in many cases, only graduate or part-time studies were undertaken.

Somewhat later, with the tremendous demand from agricultural areas for farm labor, and with the pressure to release idle labor from Relocation Centers, group work leave for qualified individuals was inaugurated. Use of this type of leave, in general, created a very favorable impression in agricultural areas adjacent to Relocation Centers, or within easy traveling distance. It is quite probable that what change has taken place in public sentiment toward the residents of Relocation Centers stems largely from the assistance given to agriculture by persons released during the summer and fall of 1942 on group work leave.

Quite naturally, there were certain abuses in the use of this type of leave, but in most cases, they were prompted by a sincere desire to assist in the relocation of individuals rather than to evade the established procedure. However, it should be pointed out that one of the biggest problems facing the Project at present, is an outgrowth of the issuance of work group leave. This has been brought about because a great many individuals initially released on work group leave have remained and are remaining away from the Project. Many of them have not made proper application which will permit Washington to act in granting them indefinite leave and, since they were away from the Project during the Mass Registration in February, indefinite leave can not be issued from the Project.

Along with the use of work group leave came short-term leave and indefinite leave. Short-term leave was established for the purpose of granting an individual leave from the Project for a short period of time to interview a prospective employer or to attend to personal affairs which required the individual's presence away from the Project. Indefinite leave was granted to individuals through the Washington office and, as it worked out in actual practice, almost without exception required six weeks to two or more months.

In an effort to facilitate the relocation of individuals who has suitable offers of employment or other satisfactory reasons for wishing to be away from the Project, considerable use was made of short-term leave over and above the strict or legitimate use prescribed in the leave regulations. There still exists, away from the Project, a number of cases involving individuals released on short-term leave who have not yet received indefinite leave from Washington (some have not even applied for this leave), and who can not be issued indefinite leave from the Project because they too, were absent during the Mass Registration.

It was the desire of the Employment Division in Washington that considerable effort be made on the Project during the winter to secure leave clearance for any individuals who contemplated leaving the Project, so that indefinite leave could be issued quite rapidly as employment or other legitimate opportunities presented themselves.

It was promised that leave clearance cases would be handled within a month at the maximum, and that subsequent applications for indefinite leave made by persons with previous leave clearance would be handled in seven to ten days. It is not meant to be implied that there was any intent on the part of the Washington office to do other than to process leave clearance and indefinite leave within these promised periods, but in actual practice, with the tremendous volume of applications which poured into Washington from all of the Projects and with the additional burden imposed by the transmission of forms taken during the Mass Registration, Washington action on leave clearance and indefinite leave cases fell woefully short of the promised time. There were cases of leave clearance applications which had not been acted upon for as long as four and five months after the date of transmittal. There were indefinite leave applications exclusive of those applying to enter the Eastern Defense Command Area, which had not been acted upon for a similar period of time. In the face of mounting pressure which was being brought to bear on Washington from all of the Projects for action on such cases, (and this pressure was only a reflection of that brought to bear upon the Project by its residents) it was quite logical that there should be a shift in emphasis in the matter of leave procedure from Washington to the individual Projects.

As might have been expected, complete freedom in the issuance of leave could not be delegated to the Projects but the whole procedure has been loosened up and speeded up tremendously. Probably more than any other single factor in the series of WRA actions designed to facilitate the relocation of individuals, this delegation of leave authority to the Projects has had the most favorable effect.

During the past three months, there have been a number of rapid and significant changes in leave policy and procedure which have tended to minimize or remove entirely many of the problems

which were confronting the Projects. Projects still are without authority to issue indefinite leave to individuals desiring to go directly from the Project to some point within the Eastern Defense Command Area. There are a few individuals who have waited for as long as six months for indefinite leave to be issued to them from Washington for entrance into the Eastern Defense Command Area, although ironically enough, there is no prohibition against an individual's moving into the Eastern Defense Command Area from some other point to which indefinite leave originally was issued. For example, residents of this Project who apply to go directly from here to New York City must have their indefinite leave applications acted upon in Washington. Such action involves not only WRA and FBI approval, but also the approval of the Eastern Defense Command. Under present conditions, action can not be expected on such an application in less than four to six weeks. On the other hand, indefinite leave can be issued by the Project for an individual to go to Chicago in the matter of one or two days. From Chicago, the individual can proceed to New York or to other points within the Eastern Defense Command Area without restrictions other than the routine requirement of notification of change of address.

One significant change which has been made in leave procedure this year is the substitution of seasonal work leave for group work leave as used last year. Seasonal work leave may be issued for an employment period of six months and may show an expiration date of one month after that. In other words, the seasonal work leave permit may show a total period of seven months or less from the effective date of the leave. It is also being used where an individual has employment for a longer period than the seven months, but where he is somewhat uncertain of his reception and is anxious to maintain closer ties with the Project than those he would feel should indefinite leave be issued. Seasonal work leave is also being issued to individuals attending NYA school, where the usual course lasts about three months. The reasoning behind this use of seasonal work leave is that should employment be obtained upon completion of the course, indefinite leave will be issued; otherwise, it is expected that the student will wish to return to the Project.

The ordinary use of seasonal work leave involves a transportation guarantee wherein the prospective employer agrees to transport employees both to and from the Project. A definite problem is created every time an individual leaves the employ of the employer who has guaranteed his return transportation to the Project. The field service must be brought in to assist in this problem for it is obviously impossible for the Project to obtain a return guarantee from the subsequent employer or employers and it is not always possible for the original employer to supply the Project with the names of these subsequent employers.

In summarizing WRA leave procedure, it is apparent that during the past few months, great strides have been made in the direction of expediting leave by placing major responsibility on the Project. An additional burden is placed on the Project as a penalty for the expediting which has been obtained in that the Project must assume much more responsibility and judgment in the matter of leave issuance. Furthermore, it must be remembered that every action of the project in the issuance of indefinite leave is subject to review by Washington, and it is quite natural to suppose that there will be occasional cases where individuals must be recalled to the Project at the direction of the Washington office, until the case is clarified.

RELOCATION

In a very basic analysis of the relocation problem, it must be recognized that the fundamental hindrance to satisfactory relocation is the inability of the average American to distinguish between the Japanese nationals with whom we are at war, and people of Japanese descent in this country, both American citizens and those to whom citizenship has been denied, and who have made this their home through choice. One must recognize that the United States Government is on one hand fighting the war against the Japanese nation, a war involving tremendous amounts of propoganda calculated to instill in the average American citizens, fear, hatred, etc., while on the other hand through WRA and facilitating agencies, it is concerned with a relocation program designed to permit the reentry into the same average American scene of persons who racially resemble this enemy we are fighting. My point is that, to the mind of the average American, it is quite difficult, apparently, to make the proper distinction, but until it is made, satisfactory relocation can not be expected. To make the problem more complicated, there are present a number of rabble rousers--opportunists, who seek to enhance their own position at the expense of those whom we are attempting to relocate.

In this connection, I should like to point out for what it is worth my feeling of tremendous need for a term to define the residents of the Projects; a term better than "Japanese-Americans," which is unsatisfactory because of its length and because it contains the word "Japanese"; and for terms better than "Issei" and "Nisei" which are unsatisfactory because they are not American terms.

It is apparent that the Project must shoulder the major load in the satisfactory relocation of its residents. To date, this relocation has been predominantly through employment. Until the field service is able to function more fully than at present, employment opportunities probably will continue to be secured by the individuals themselves. It reflects very favorably on the abilities and attitudes of those individuals who have been relocated to date that, in the main, they have secured their own

employment opportunities and have sold their abilities to their prospective employers. Under such a system, it is quite natural that the more competent and energetic individuals have been relocated first, and that those left on the Project will find it somewhat more difficult to be relocated satisfactorily. It follows that relocation of such individuals will become largely the responsibility of WRA. In this process, the need for closer cooperation with the field branch will be imperative .

In a summary of relocation which has taken place to date , it is unfortunate that Hostell and hospitality offers and employment secured through efforts of ministers and other public spirited persons, appear to be more predominant than offers from what might be called the normal American groups. In local areas, it is apparent that efforts of the field service have been satisfactory in securing employment offers which will place individuals at levels for which they are qualified and will provide incomes equal to that of comparable worker.

On the Project, there is an apparent need for greater efforts to obtain qualified individuals to fill job offers which are received and to play down domestic, restaurant and substandard offers. In view of certain unfortunate results which have occurred when unqualified individuals were referred to employment offers, it would seem beneficial (providing there is time and proper facilities) that the employer's acceptance of the individual be received before leave is issued.

The Project will find it a tremendous problem to handle the residue which inevitably will be left when all or most of the qualified people have been relocated. Membership of this residue largely will be confined to individuals too old for employment, or without relatives with whom they could live. However, it is probable that there will be a few who wish to remain on the Project for reasons best covered perhaps by the term "psychological cases", i.e., those who are afraid of the treatment they would receive off the Project; those who hold considerable resentment as a result of evacuation; or those who are qualified to resume normal positions in American life but lack the confidence to do so.

There are a number of problems of Project origin which contribute toward making relocation difficult. For example, there are the persistent rumors that, once indefinite leave has been issued to an individual, he will be unable to return to the project. Another is that if the head of a family secures employment off the Project and leaves his family here, he will be required to pay board and room for them.

Perhaps one way to assist the whole relocation situation is through the establishment of a bureau or service to consult with persons planning to leave the Project. What I have in mind is a service to be performed which is not covered at present by the Counselor; which is not covered by the Leave Section as it

functions at present; nor by the travel counselor. Probably rather than organize a new bureau, the function that I have in mind could be delegated to the leave officer or could be shared jointly by the counselor, the travel bureau, and the leave officer. The mechanism would not matter so long as the function were performed.

Some of the activities which could be covered would involve a discussion with individuals as to their plans upon leaving the Project. For example, the head of a family going out alone to accept employment should have definite plans formulated to have his family join him as soon as it is possible. This is only natural if satisfactory relocation is to be accomplished. There are many congested areas and occupation. These problems should be discussed with individuals contemplating relocation. For example, it is felt that Denver, Salt Lake City, and the Twin Falls area, insofar as this Project is concerned, are caring for the maximum number of people from Project who can be satisfactorily relocated. (It has been decided by the Relocation Supervisor in Denver that no more individuals should be relocated in domestic employment in the Denver area.) There are other problems for which no satisfactory answer has yet been proposed, such as what action to take in regard to individuals who do not report to the place for which indefinite leave was issued to them, or who leave the place of employment without proper notification. There is need to interpret to employers individuals who are particularly shy, self-conscious, or momentarily terrified at the prospect of reentering normal American life. Individuals leaving the Project should be cautioned against concentration, both as to place of residence and social gatherings, at places where adverse criticism might be expected.

POSTWAR CONSIDERATIONS

On the face of it, it is extremely difficult for many individuals who have been evacuated to overcome the shock which loss of income, loss of position, and loss of social status have brought. The failure of the Government to evacuate persons of German ancestry and Italian ancestry along with those of Japanese ancestry, presents a problem which cannot be answered to the satisfaction of a great many Project residents. The psychological racial barrier usually erected by the Caucasian majority against any racial minority group has tended, in most cases, to force those of Japanese ancestry to live in concentrated areas and to organize and participate in their own social life.

The history of this country's past treatment of minority racial groups does not lend too much optimism to treatment which will be accorded Project residents as they are being relocated now, or as they will attempt to reenter normal American life after the war. In all honesty, one cannot make any promises that residents of the Projects will be permitted to return to pro-

perty and positions occupied prior to evacuation; nor can any reward for services he held out. It is almost axiomatic that where residents of the Project are known, they are liked. Dislike seems to spring from some form of fear, such as fear of competition or fear of some traitorous action.

If we were able to predict postwar conditions, many of these problems would automatically be answered. It would appear to be our place to further satisfactory relocation by every available means, to instill into each individual being relocated the doctrine that he is in effect an emissary of all other residents who will be approved or condemned partially, at least, on the basis of his conduct, and to bring about insofar as possible, through our individual actions, the type of postwar world which we desire and in which the Project residents can assume an equal place with all other Americans.

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