

DEMOCRACY IN RELOCATION

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THE greatest involuntary migration in the history of the United States has been completed. Within the space of a few months, some 110,000 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry, about two-thirds of them American citizens, have been moved from their homes in the western portions of the country. After temporary residence in assembly centers, they now are living in ten relocation centers between the Mississippi River and the high Sierras.

This mass evacuation shatters all precedent so far as this nation is concerned.

But evacuation was a step which seemed necessary to help insure the safety of our western shore against an enemy who looked like these people and who had taken advantage of the situation to infiltrate the Japanese population of our West Coast with his agents. Even the people of Japanese ancestry who were loyal to the United States could not always detect the enemy agents in their midst.

The authority to cause the evacuation was, and is, one of the wartime powers of the President, which he delegated to the Secretary of War, and which was re-delegated to the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command. The same authority has been given to other military commanders. One of these military officers could order the evacuation of any other persons, individually, or in groups—if he determined that such evacuation was necessary to the security of

the nation and to the defense of the area in his command.

The exclusion order, which called for all persons of Japanese ancestry to leave the western portions of Washington, Oregon, California, and the southern part of Arizona (later all of California was included in the area to be evacuated), was issued on March second of this year. The evacuated persons might leave when they liked and go to any place outside the area to be evacuated. As might have been anticipated, they were slow to move. Most of the Japanese and their American-born children and grandchildren always had lived in the coastal states and were at a loss to know where to go. It took time to make arrangements for disposing of businesses, farms, and homes. Many made no effort to move. So it became apparent that voluntary evacuation within a short period of time was doomed to failure, not only because of reluctance to go but because the movement of more than 100,000 people into new communities was bound to cause trouble.

The Japanese Americans for the most part have lived in colonies in this country, and some attempted to move in groups. Some of these group moves were successful, but in other instances the residents of the communities resented the migration and let their resentment be known in no uncertain terms. Officials of most of the western states refused to be responsible for law and order if the evacuees came into their states as unrestricted

residents. This combination of situations pointed to two things: first, evacuation must be placed on an orderly basis; and, second, the evacuated persons must be provided with homes which would offer security and opportunities for work until orderly processes of relocation could be made effective.

On March 29, just 27 days after evacuation was begun, voluntary evacuation was halted, and planned and systematic evacuation began. Area by area, evacuees left their homes when they were ordered by authorities to do so. Temporary quarters were provided hurriedly by the military, while a search was made for other places where evacuees might live and work until such time as they might be reabsorbed into society. The temporary quarters, provided by the Wartime Civil Control Administration, were called assembly centers, 14 in number, all located in the area to be evacuated. In a few weeks 10 other sites were chosen for relocation centers into which the evacuated persons would be moved as soon as accommodations could be provided. These are in eastern California, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and Arkansas, for the most part on publicly owned land which has possibilities of development for agriculture and other enterprises.

The War Relocation Authority has responsibility for the welfare of the evacuees after they have been removed from the assembly centers to these relocation centers. This is a responsibility not to be taken lightly, for on the conduct of the relocation program as a whole rest the future attitudes of some 110,000 persons, including about 70,000 American citizens.

If the evacuees are permitted to live in a manner as nearly normal as possible, with responsibility for the management of the communities in which they live, with educational opportunities, with a

chance to develop initiative, and with reason to look forward to a better day, then there is a probability that they may be retained as contributing members of a democratic society.

II

As this is written, nine of the ten relocation centers have at least a portion of their residents, and four are fully populated. The process of relocation is scheduled to be completed before this appears in print. It may be in order to consider the manner in which the residents of these new communities, communities which are new to this nation, are living.

In certain respects, life in relocation centers is not unlike life in any other community. In other respects, for reasons of economy and efficiency of administration and because of the temporary nature of the centers, conditions are necessarily different.

Housing is on the pattern of Army "Theatre of Operations" type of construction: barrack-type buildings, 100 feet long by 20 feet wide, usually divided into four compartments, 20 by 25 feet. Some of the single men live in barracks without the compartment divisions. The buildings are arranged in blocks, with a dining hall, bath house, and recreation hall to each block, to serve the needs of 275 to 300 people. The feeding problem, purchasing, distribution, and preparation of food is handled much like Army mess. Everyone eats in dining halls, and the menus are planned as a compromise between the tastes of the aliens, who have a preference for Oriental dishes, and their American-born children and grandchildren who prefer American-type foods. Families live together, but it is not feasible at present to provide for individual family feeding.

Almost all the families, of course, had

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household goods. Put in storage at government expense at the time of evacuation, it is now being sent to the owners at relocation centers as rapidly as possible, so that each family may have its own furniture.

Clothing is provided within certain maximum limits. It is up to each family to determine what clothing will be bought within the limits of the allowance.

The community stores are to be operated as co-operative enterprises, by an association to which any evacuee resident of the community may belong. The co-operative association chooses its own officers who determine what kinds of shops, stores, and other enterprises will be undertaken, and how the profits will be distributed, in accordance with the laws of the state in which it is incorporated. The staff of the War Relocation Authority audits the books at intervals, but the management is entirely in the hands of the evacuees themselves, and of course there is an abundance of merchandising experience and skills upon which they may draw. In most centers, whose population ranges from 7,000 to 18,000, the co-operative association elects to establish one or more "general stores" which sell soft drinks, ice cream, usually a few items of groceries, clothing, shoes, tobacco, candy, toilet articles, and other items not supplied to the evacuees by the administration of the center, and a shoe repair shop, barber shop, and beauty parlor. A newspaper is also a standard enterprise to meet the needs of the community.

The newspaper stands as one of the notable evidences of democracy in the center. Once the paper has been established as a community enterprise under evacuee management and control, the editorial staff has complete freedom of expression except for the restrictions against libel and personal attack which limit the activities of the press anywhere.

Organizations of many kinds are permitted. Since the Issei, or Japanese-born people, usually do not speak English well, their meetings are held in the Japanese tongue, if they desire.

There is freedom of worship. Services are conducted regularly by members of Buddhist, Catholic, and most of the Protestant faiths. Many of the ministers are evacuees, though Caucasian ministers come in from outside, representing their national church organizations.

In each relocation center schools have been established, with curricula which meet the standards of the state in which the center is located. The regular school system within the community covers the range from kindergarten through high school; other educational activities go beyond the usual school age limits, with day nurseries for the tiny ones, and an extensive program of adult education for persons beyond ordinary school age. Evacuee teachers are used to the fullest available extent, but approximately two-thirds of the teachers are Caucasians. The one major respect in which the curriculum in a relocation center school varies from other schools in the state is that more opportunity is provided for vocational education. The work activities provide laboratories for youngsters, particularly in high school, so they may obtain more than the usual amount of supervised experience in agriculture, carpentry, sewing, and other vocational activities.

The extent to which democracy is practiced in the relocation centers is represented best, perhaps, by the community government. While the administrative staff of necessity must have responsibility for such things as food, housing, employment, and agricultural production, the supervision of life in the community is left largely up to the evacuees themselves. The legislative body is a Council, with representatives chosen from each

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block. All residents of the center 18 years of age and above may vote, but only American citizens 21 and older may hold elective office. Any one of voting age, however, may serve on committees or in appointive positions.

The regulations and laws of the community are established by the Community Council, and the "court" is a Judicial Commission, usually consisting of three persons, which sits in judgment on cases of violation of the community laws. Major offenses, such as felonies, are turned over to officials and courts outside.

Each relocation center has its own fire department and its own police, or "wardens" as the evacuees prefer to call them. The wardens are not armed, and their job for the most part is one of helping, rather than restricting, the residents of the community.

III

With the nation fighting for its life and needing the productive effort of every man and woman, it is unthinkable that the available manpower in the relocation centers should not be employed in productive effort of some kind. True, the Geneva Convention, governing treatment of enemy aliens, prevents the use of citizens of Japan in direct war work, but there are other ways in which their skills may be used. A fundamental objective of the administration of the relocation centers is to see that work opportunities are provided for everyone. During the early days of each center, this was rather difficult, but as time passes, more and more things are developed which mean jobs for more people.

One of the basic considerations in selecting sites for the relocation centers was the possibility of agricultural production. In some instances, part of the available land already was in production; other

land had to be cleared, or leveled; water had to be brought onto the land, or drained off. But with potentially productive soil, and with about half the population composed of farm people, agriculture is one of the great possibilities. About 2,700 acres of crops were planted and harvested in 1942 and several hundred acres of winter vegetables now are growing. Before the close of the production season in 1943, it seems likely that the relocation centers will produce all their own vegetables, all their eggs and poultry, and about half their meat requirements, largely in the form of pork and pork products. This, of course, will help reduce the public expense of operating the relocation centers. In addition to subsistence production, there are some agricultural commodities which can be produced to meet the needs of the nation as a whole: one of the centers is in the heart of the long-staple cotton area of Arizona; others are well suited to the production of sugar beet seed and vegetable seed, and some of the evacuated farmers are skilled in seed production.

Opportunities for the establishment of industries in which evacuees may work are being explored, and hold considerable promise. It is planned to establish some types of industries to manufacture goods needed by the evacuees themselves. Clothing and school furniture are two things which appear to be likely objects of manufacture at the present time. Early in the evacuation program, American citizens among the evacuees went to work weaving colored burlap into nets, to make camouflage screens for the Army. The long lists of materials needed by the Army and the Navy suggest other items which might be manufactured in relocation centers.

As this is written, one manufacturer who has a war contract is breaking ground for a factory building at one of the re-

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location centers. At first, about 120 evacuees will be employed and trained in a trade completely new to all of them. If the experiment is successful, the factory may be expanded to employ several times as many persons.

All evacuees at relocation centers are provided with food, lodging, and medical care. In addition, those who perform services for the community as a whole, such as the cooks, stenographers, farm workers, truck drivers, and timekeepers, receive nominal wages, or "cash advances" from the War Relocation Authority and clothing allowances for themselves and their dependents. The cash advances are \$12 for beginning workers, \$16 monthly for the majority of the workers, and \$19 monthly for those performing difficult, responsible, or professional tasks.

Those employed in enterprises run by the co-operative association receive wages and clothing allowances on the same scale, paid out of funds of the co-operative association. However, industries under private management established at or near the relocation centers to employ evacuee workers will pay the wages prevailing in the industry. Workers in these industries will reimburse the administration for the cost of subsistence for themselves and their families. It will be left to the evacuee community to determine whether those workers will keep all the remaining money, or whether everything above \$16 or \$19 monthly will be put into a general fund to be divided among all workers, those employed in community services as well as those who earn the higher wages. Thus far, there has been no opportunity for an evacuee community to cast a vote on the matter, but the first decision of this sort will be watched with a great deal of interest.

During the summer months, there was a serious shortage of labor in many parts of the country, and sugar beet growers

asked that groups of evacuees be permitted to leave the assembly and relocation centers to care for the growing beet crop. About 1,700 workers left the centers to work in the sugar beet fields. The locations in which they worked all were outside the evacuated area and, within limits, they traveled, lived, and worked without guard, just as any other group might have done. About 1,200 stayed outside the centers through the harvest season. When harvest time for sugar beets came, the demand for labor was even greater, and several thousand were permitted to leave the centers for this work. At the close of the season, they will return to the relocation centers. Several hundred other evacuees picked long-staple cotton in Arizona, living in the relocation center and going to and from the cotton fields daily. The total employment of evacuees in the harvesting of farm crops at this writing is over 7,600.

Before the workers went out of the centers to the sugar beet fields, there were certain conditions which had to be met: the employer agreed to provide satisfactory housing; and an official of the state or county agreed to be responsible for law and order. There were no serious incidents of any kind, and the workers met with the general approbation of their employers.

The success of this large-scale experiment suggests that as the supply of manpower in the nation grows smaller and the demand grows stronger, employers of many different kinds may request that persons now living in relocation centers be permitted to leave to take jobs. If that should become the case, the policies of the War Relocation Authority will permit such employment of individuals or groups. The evacuees now living in the relocation centers may leave the centers if certain conditions prevail:

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(a) if they have a definite place to go and means of support, outside of designated military areas; (b) if they agree to report any change of address; (c) if there is reasonable assurance of their acceptability in the community where they plan to go; and (d) if nothing in their records with official investigative agencies indicates they would constitute a danger to the security of the nation. The great majority of the 110,000 residents of the relocation centers will be able to meet these requirements, and so will be available for employment if needed and desired.

The success of this permanent, dispersed phase of relocation will be dependent on the sentiment of the public in general, and the sentiment of the evacuees. If evacuated persons will be accepted

by the public, and if the evacuees themselves are willing to try to establish themselves in communities outside the relocation centers, then genuine progress can be made in permanent relocation. The principles underlying public acceptance of the evacuees as individuals would seem to be closely allied to the things we are fighting for.

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