

MINIDOKA WAR RELOCATION PROJECT

Hunt, Idaho

MEMO TO: D. S. Myer, Director  
ATTENTION: John C. Baker, Chief, Office of Reports  
SUBJECT: Report for Quarter Ended December 31, 1942.

INTRODUCTION: In the three-month period between October 1 and December 31 the Minidoka Relocation Center passed through new stages of development and adjustment. Instead of being of settling-down period after the movement of evacuees from Portland and Puyallup Assembly Centers, it was a time filled with new emergencies and new problems to be met by the appointed personnel and evacuee residents.

No sooner had the last evacuees arrived in mid-September than they began leaving the center in groups to work in the harvest fields. After starting slowly the emergency farm work program gained momentum as desperate farmers turned to the center for labor to save their crops and as the center residents were reassured that fair treatment and good wages awaited them outside. Fluctuation of the center's population from 8311 on October 1 to a low point of 7341 on October 23 and back to 8091 on December 31 caused serious problems in the center administration, particularly in the project labor supply.

The number of workers on the project increased as activities expanded and, likewise, the appointed personnel increased from 63 on October 1 to 101 on December 31.

Minnesota's 2300 residents and 1000 from other centers working in surrounding areas brought the evacuees to the public's attention and indicated how the relocation of evacuees into normal life would be received in such areas. It was indicated that wide-spread prejudices remained, and that people were resentful of evacuees' eating in restaurants, buying in stores, going to movies, etc. The people who employed evacuees in farm work and in other work were the more favorably disposed toward them. Farmers and businessmen forced by economic necessity to employ evacuees and to seek their patronage sought publicly greater tolerance for the evacuees.

Through the death of a 54-year old resident who became lost and died from exposure, the center learned of the treacherous nature of sagebrush-covered plains and gullies in the project area. Although the residents came from a mild coast climate, the cold weather did not seem to affect them seriously.

LABOR: As the project developed, employment increased from 3033 on October 1 to 4157 on December 31 including 2771 men and 1386 women. All divisions showed increases except the stewards which dropped one employee to 1349 at the end of the quarter. Public works rose from 551 to 1045; transportation and supply from 235 to 447; medical from 257 to 294; and all others from 540 to 922. In the latter group employment on December 31 was divided as follows: placement, 85; housing, 90; community enterprises, 163; internal security, 104; project reports, 20; fire department, 68; community services, 264; administrative, 108.

Departure of residents for the harvest fields created numerous

problems of replacement after the normal labor supply was exhausted. In the first week in October more than 400 project workers left for the harvest, and the project's operating efficiency slipped accordingly. At the peak, 2300 were working on farm furlough, 1800 living outside and 500 commuting from the center. Until the first week in November when the farm workers began to return to the center, it was difficult to find the manpower required to maintain the essential services on the project. Women were trained as firemen, truck drivers, warehousemen, and for other men's jobs. At one time 60% of the residents were working on the project or in outside farm work, a far greater percentage than in a normal community.

There was considerable evidence that the farm workers were satisfactory to their employers. A letter written to the director by five Twin Falls farmers included the comment: "This crew consisted of 12 men and 12 women, and over the period of harvest, picked 91 acres of potatoes which averaged about 180 sacks per acres. They also topped 99 acres of beets which averaged approximately 22 tons per acre. The crew commuted between the relocation center and the farms in Twin Falls County, Idaho and conducted themselves in a very business like manner, and we can honestly say that they were the finest and most cooperative help that we have had in a number of years. The crew was always on time in the morning, worked as long as it was possible regardless of weather conditions. In fact some days when weather was bad and we felt that it would not be advisable to work, the crew was there ready to go and we proceeded in getting these crops out. We feel sure in our own minds that considerable acreage of these crops would have been a loss to us that we had not been able to have obtained the help of these Japanese evacuees...They

had no experience with the type of work which they were doing for us, but within a couple of days had adapted themselves so that they could be called "excellent farm hands" of this territory. This harvest season was approximately 35 working days in length and this crew received approximately \$4250."

At the end of the quarter 955 persons were unemployed of which 580 were women and 375 men. This compared with 1195---819 women and 366 men--on October 1. Many of the unemployed were people returning from harvest furlough and the placement office found it difficult to assign these people to relieve the acute labor shortage existing in certain departments such as land clearance, airport construction, coal handling, and other outside work because only 9% stated their preference for outside work.

The unpleasant jobs around the project such as coal handling and other jobs named above created serious placement problem since the WRA was unable to provide gloves and footwear, two items which were worn out rapidly by those engaged in outside manual labor. These outside workers took the view point that they were allowed no greater clothing allowance than the office worker and yet had to provide and replace clothing on a much larger scale. An additional factor was that unemployment compensation was only 40% less than the regular wage scale.

On December 31 a total of 501 persons were registered but not employable, and 955 were registered but not employed. The first group included 467 who had not reported back from harvest furlough, 13 transferred to other centers, 45 inactive, 39 students relocated,

63 on off-project work, 61 ill, 211 under age, and two deceased. The latter group of 560 women and 375 men included 136 persons assigned pending acceptance on employment offers posted 48 hours before withdrawal.

LEAVES: Beginning with the granting of the first indefinite leave for employment on October 23, a total of 28 persons (7 men and 21 women) during the quarter were given indefinite leave, and 18 young men enlisted in the Army and left the project to attend the Army language school at Camp Savage, Minnesota. Of the men who were granted indefinite leave, one went to the University of Michigan as a clerk, one went to a waiter's job, one to farm labor, two to domestic work, and two to join their families. Ten of the women took domestic jobs, two left to join their families, two to join their husbands, five to get married, one to take a secretarial job, and one as a nurses' aide. In addition to these persons, there was one resident under 16 who left with his parents.

Residents are being advised to seek leave clearance if they plan to leave the project regardless of whether at the moment they have a job or other reason in view. When a resident applies for leave clearance, basic information is taken. Later he is sent a written notice to appear at the Leaves office for a personal interview with one of the appointed personnel. After obtaining leave clearance he is required to have a job or some other assurances of adequate income to apply for indefinite leave.

HOSPITAL: During the quarter the hospital received 406 in-patients, 4636 out-patients; there were 2981 dental patients; 31 births, and 12 deaths.

While there was no outbreak of serious contagious diseases, the hospital staff was kept busy. At the close of the quarter the dental clinic was making appointments two months ahead. The continued lack of development of the sewerage system was an undesirable factor in the public health situation. What was believed to be gonorrhoea (later developments raised a question about it) appeared on the project in mid-October among new mothers and babies at the hospital. The occurrence coincided with the return of farm workers to the project. However, among hundreds of men examined only one was found infected. The possibility of the outdoor latrines being sources of infection was considered. The prevalence of the disease caused wide-spread rumors about the hospital and about the outdoor latrines, and brought additional pressure to bear on the administration to get the sewerage treatment plant and the inside flush toilets into operation. The placement office had trouble getting residents to take jobs in the hospital.

AGRICULTURE: Lack of equipment and also a shortage of manpower hampered the land clearance program. About 75 acres were cleared of sagebrush inside the center area adjacent to the proposed high school site, and it is planned that high school students cultivate this as part of their agricultural training. An additional 150 acres east of the center in the project area were cleared of sagebrush.

It is planned to put this acreage and as much additional as can be cleared and irrigated by spring into a cover crop and later in the season to plant potatoes and peas as conditions warrant. The weather and also the availability of necessary equipment will govern the progress of the program. It is conceded that the acreage

under cultivation this year will be small, possibly only 500 acres. The project is aiming toward a full farming program in 1944.

Lack of feed and of materials to build barns were the principal factors in eliminating the livestock program for this year.

PROJECT ATTORNEY: The project attorney noticed a growing tendency on the part of the evacuees to sell their property back home. It seemed that while many of them had decided at the time of the evacuation to hang onto their businesses and run them through managers and by mail, many had reached the conclusion now after numerous difficulties with absentee proprietorship that it would be better to sell out and start anew someday. Hotels, restaurants, farm properties, and other businesses have been sold. The absentee proprietors' troubles are exemplified by the case of a Seattle hotel owner who left the place under the management of a Caucasian. The managership changed hands five times within six months and he finally received word from a Seattle city health official that the latest manager had abandoned the hotel, that there was no clean linen for the tenants, that there was no heat, and that the hotel was rapidly being emptied.

COUNSELOR: No undue increase in social and domestic problems was noted by the counselor's staff. More single young men expressed a desire to leave their parents' homes and live in bachelor quarters. In many cases these young men had not been living with their parents prior to evacuation.

Because a number of elderly evacuees have comparatively young wives, and because the husbands are now "underfoot" more than formerly, some difficulties have arisen.

The determination of need for assistance grants for clothing, eye glasses, and special grants was a major function. About 95% of the center's residents received clothing grants on the basis of work or need.

A hospital annex was established in a barrack near the hospital for old people who were not hospital cases, but who were unable to take care of themselves.

There were 28 marriages in which one or both of the principals were residents. Fifteen ceremonies were performed outside the center and 13 inside.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES: This program was hampered by a lack of materials, recreation halls, and other equipment, and by interruptions in planned program due to residents leaving the center on harvest work furlough.

Most of the outside workers returned in time to participate in the Christmas celebration which was the first community-wide affair and resulted in wide-spread cooperation and a general uplift in morale. A total of 17,000 Christmas gifts were received from outside individuals, church groups, and other groups for the children in the center. This evidence of goodwill had a noticeable effect upon the residents. A highlight of the Christmas celebration was the competition among the dining halls for the best decorations out of the limited supplies and materials at hand. The ingenuity in using sagebrush, wood shavings, tin cans, and scrap materials impressed all who saw the decorated halls.

Since much of the leisure time of the residents is devoted to arts and handicrafts, an exhibit on these products was a big event in

the center and attracted 5,000 visitors. Polishing the bitterbrush wood found in the project area to make art objects is one of the favorite leisure time diversions of the men as knitting and sewing are among the women.

Buddhist and Protestant churches and schools in Seattle whose members are now Minidoka center residents loaned to the Community Activities department 18 pianos, four organs, more than 2,000 folding chairs and miscellaneous benches, and tables which went a long way toward relieving the acute shortage of these articles existing on the project. The Protestant churches formed a Federated Church Council to consolidate activities in the center.

SCHOOLS: By surmounting numerous difficulties, such as lack of classroom space, equipment, and teachers, the Minidoka schools opened during the quarter.

The two elementary schools, one located at each end of the center, opened October 19. One (block 10) opened with an enrollment of 304 and the other (block 32) with an enrollment of 428. There were nine appointed personnel teachers and the principal on duty at the opening of school, and in addition, 22 assistants from the residents. On December 31 there were 13 appointed personnel teachers and the principal, assistant principal, and 22 resident assistants including two certified teachers. On December 31 five more personnel teachers were en route to the project, leaving the staff just two short. In the block 10 school, four barracks and a recreation hall were partially turned over to the school to make nine classrooms and a recreation hall office for the assistant principal. In the block

32 school, five barracks were partially occupied to make 12 classrooms and the principal occupied the recreation hall.

The highschool opened November 16 with an enrollment of 1297. There were 17 teachers and six department heads. On December 31 there were 19 full-time teachers, five directing teachers (such as physical education, librarian, etc.) and six department heads, leaving the staff short six teachers. At the opening of school, 24 residents were assistants and on December 31 there were 23 resident assistants, none of them a certified teacher. All or part of nine barracks in block 23, the utility building, dining hall, and recreation hall, and the recreation halls in blocks 22 and 24 were turned over to the high school and remodeled into classrooms. The science laboratory was set up in the laundry room, and the dining hall was made into a study-library.

Wet weather conditions turned the areas around the schools into muddy morasses. Lack of desks, books, and other classroom equipment and the absence of suitable recreational facilities handicapped the school program at the start. The pupils came from many different schools (high school enrollment was from 56 different schools) and it took several weeks to get acquainted. As the quarter ended, school activities such as a newspaper and mixers were underway to help create a more normal school atmosphere. The high school department launched a program to put students over 16 on a work experience schedule, one-half day in school, and one-half day in actual work on the project in the same field in which they were studying. For

this they received half pay. About 200 of the 500 students over 16 were participating in such a program as the quarter ended, mainly as carpenters, mechanics, nurses' aides, waitresses, and typists.

Arrangements were made with the Idaho Vocational Education department to furnish equipment and night school teachers for a re-training program. The project furnished warehouse space. The equipment may be used for high school shop classes during the day.

ADULT EDUCATION: The adult education department program got underway in November with beginning English Americanization classes attracting 150 to 200 evacuee residents, mostly elderly people and mainly women. Three evacuee teachers conducted the afternoon and evening classes. Shorthand and typing classes attracted about 170. A stenographers' pool of 35, who received half pay for working from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. and two hours on Saturday afternoon, was started to train typists and, at the same time, to get voluminous project business typing done. The advanced mathematics classes drew about 32 people interested in learning or in refreshing geometry and algebra. Afternoon classes of American government and American history were well attended with about 50 residents in each class. Other classes and the approximate attendance were bookkeeping, 53; radio physics and code program, 10; office program, 35; accounting, 5; and biology, 8.

Attendance at the adult classes depended largely on the weather. About 20 evacuees and six appointed personnel were teaching with half of the evacuee teachers working on other jobs, and, therefore, teaching the adult classes on volunteer basis.

COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES: With a number of experienced businessmen from Seattle and Portland among the residents, the growth of Community Enterprises was steady and rapid culminating with the filing of articles of incorporation of the Minidoka Consumers' Co-operative December 22 in Washington, D. C.

Many new services were added during the quarter as gross income climbed from \$33,558 in October to \$80,647 in December and the payroll from 76 persons on October 1 to 168 on December 31. The two dry good stores which did only \$36 worth of business in September had a volume of \$11,679 in December. More clothing would have been sold if it had been available. Buyers for the stores found it increasingly difficult to maintain an adequate or even close to adequate inventory as merchandise grew more restricted due to wartime conditions. They were looking ahead to further rationing, especially to the proposed point rationing program on canned goods. The stores adhered strictly to rationing requirements and even went further. When coffee was rationed, it would have been possible for the stores to stock up ahead of the start of rationing since they would be allowed to sell out their stock. However, they did not choose to do this.

Showing of motion pictures was started during the quarter under a program allowing all students free admission and charging adults 10%. The movies are now shown twice a night alternating for several nights between a theater set up in a rec. hall in one end of the center and a similar building at the other end. The gross was \$578 in December. Other services established and their December grosses include: a flower shop, \$1020; two barber shops, \$687; two watch repair shops, \$454; beauty shop, \$767; shoe repair shop, \$528;

and general and radio repair shop, \$1126. An optical department to secure eyeglasses for residents was established in December and grossed \$192. A center bus service was started but abandoned almost immediately because of the difficulties of operation.

Services begun prior to October 1 expanded during the quarter. The four general merchandise stores which had a gross business of \$7192 in August rang up \$42,720 in December. The two mail order departments which did a \$13,662 business in September grossed \$20,273 in December. The newspaper distribution service gross gained from \$277 in September to \$534 in December. The telegraph department income increased from \$48 in October to \$171 in December. In charge of the affairs of the co-operative was a temporary board of 14 members, all Issei except one.

EVACUEE MORALE: There were no outbreak or large scale demonstrations of evacuee sentiments during the period. The lack of indoor flush toilets, especially after they had been promised time and time again, was a particularly sore spot to the residents. Another major disturbing factor was the lack of coal for heating residences until mid-November prior to which there was cold weather which caused considerable discomfort. The first pay (for September) was not distributed until toward the middle of November, and up to that time, morale among the workers was not as good as it was later. There was sporadic grumbling by small groups until certain conditions in the center were gradually corrected. As stoves were installed in all barracks, as delivery of food occurred on schedule, as street lights were installed, as the winter moisture ended the dust condition,

and as pay days and clothing grants arrived with some regularity, the residents made fewer protests.

There were a few rumors widely circulated, but none of them proved permanently harmful. One of the more disturbing ones had the center <sup>being</sup> evacuated in the near future by removal of the residents to another center, and so well founded was the rumor that many residents changed plans because of it. The relocation program was hurt by the rumor that residents who left on indefinite leave could not return to the center under any circumstances. The prevalence of gonorrhoea touched off rumors about the sanitary conditions of the hospital and also made residents fearful of using the outdoor latrines. These and other rumors did not materialize from nothing, but were caused by erroneous assumptions based on half truths or misinterpretations of other occurrences. The administration followed the policy of revealing all the facts to smother the rumors.

Physical conditions had much to do with the attitude of the residents, especially the workers. The weather was very wet turning the center into a quagmire. On particularly unpleasant days, the morale of the people in general seemed to fall, and a reverse result was noted when the weather was good. During the early part of the period when the dining hall staff had not been organized, and the poor cooks weeded out, there was considerable discontent over the food.

There was little evidence of wide breaks between different age groups and political groups. While the people grouped themselves into natural divisions with common interests friction between these groups did not approach a danger point. There seemed to be more differences

of opinion between young and old than between political groups. The second generation seemed to feel that the older people were prone to restrict their entertainment and activities. The success of the Christmas celebration showed that all ages were inclined to cooperate on projects of mutual interest. Anonymous letters attacked leaders of the J. A. C. L. and also registered complaints over imagined partiality shown the second generation.

The center residents were fortunate in maintaining contacts with the outside through the 500 commuting workers and through the 1800 evacuees who lived outside during the harvest season. This helped to break down the isolated and confined feeling among the residents.

The barbed wire fence which was erected during the quarter was and remains the greatest source of displeasure to the residents. They feel it was entirely unnecessary, and to them symbolizes and accentuates their confinement.

PUBLIC RELATIONS: The public's attitude toward the evacuees was worthy of notice in areas where the two were in contact such as Twin Falls and Jerome, cities nearest the center and also accessible to farm workers, and the smaller farming towns such as Filer, Rupert, and Gooding where evacuee farm workers were located.

The trend of public opinion seemed to be easy to follow. This area was depopulated to a certain extent by the military services and war industries, and the arrival of the evacuee buying power was welcomed. As the harvest season progressed and more and more evacuees were able to visit the towns to shop, see a movie, eat in restaurants, etc., a reaction set in and as shortages became more pronounced, they were

blamed on evacuee shoppers even though the shortages were part of a national condition. Also crowded conditions in stores, theaters, and restaurants were laid to the evacuees with some justification. Merchants wanted the evacuee business every day of the week except Saturday when the non-Japanese customers could keep their stores busy. At the close of the harvest season, the pendulum swung back and merchants who had stocked up on small sizes became concerned about the absence of evacuee shoppers. They became so concerned in Twin Falls that the Chamber of Commerce launched a squelch-the-rumor campaign to combat antagonism toward the evacuees through the newspaper, through store clerks, through churches, and through service clubs. The first rumor spiked through the Twin Falls newspaper was that evacuee residents got Prestone antifreeze which was unavailable to the public.

Newspapers in the area were completely fair and of their own accord refrained from printing rumors and antagonistic letters to the editor which would start a public controversy over the evacuees and the W. R. A. program. The newspapers invariably used press releases from the reports officer without altering them, and were entirely cooperative in handling news from the center.

An important part of public relations was personal contact between the center and outsiders. During the three-month period, 11 groups including service clubs, church people, farmers, and youth groups and totaling 604 persons toured the center. They saw at first hand the evacuees at work and saw where they live, eat, go to church, go to school, and play. It appeared to be very valuable in promoting better understanding between the evacuees and those who had never

before been around persons of Japanese ancestry.

In addition, 22 of the appointed personnel, principally the director, assistant director, and community services personnel, spoke outside at the invitation of clubs and various other groups.

COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT: The seven members of the community government planning commission continued to work on the proposed charter.

FIRE PROTECTION DEPARTMENT: Harvest furloughs made it difficult to maintain a full fire crew. The crew fluctuated from 37 members on October 1 to 12 members on October 13, <sup>back to</sup> 56 firemen and 9 firewomen on December 31. In a recent poll to determine how many plan to go out again this year, 48 out of the 56 firemen said they would go out as soon as they had the chance. Firewomen were trained to relieve the shortage of men. No fire of any size occurred on the project during the quarter.

INTERNAL SECURITY: The Internal Security staff of 98 persons was confronted with little crime. It functioned principally as an investigating bureau for leave clearance records, as a lost and found department, on patrol duty, and to cope with minor violations of the law, such as occasional drunkenness of workers back from the best fields, petty thefts, and minor disturbances. Seventy-four members with the force are non-citizens, and 24 are citizens. The head of the department, C. B. Lee, wrote a police training syllabus for use in the extensive training program which was just getting underway as the period ended.

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Harry L. Stafford,  
Project Director

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by John Bigelow,  
Reports Officer