

THE EVACUATION AND RELOCATION OF JAPANESE AMERICANS

Emergency evacuations are a common experience in human history, and no one can every predict the ultimate results. A large number of people were once compelled to leave the rich valley of the Nile and find their way in the shadow of darkness out into a land across the Red Sea. Behind them remained what seemed to be a strong nation, but is ultimately produced only tombs and a decaying society; while out of that small group of evacuees walked Moses into human history, whose Ten Commandments today provide the foundation for the laws of equity and justice throughout the civilized world. Some 700 years later descendants of those same evacuees were forced by a war situation into Babylon, where in an evacuation center they toiled about as far from the River Chibar as Rohwer, Arkansas, is from the Mississippi. This evacuation lasted more than a generation, and out of it came the Hebrew Bible; while the old nation of Babylon left her palaces buried beneath the shifting sand. The Bible produced in that evacuation center has been a blessing to mankind sufficient to outweigh the sorrow and toil of 100,000 people who were so depressed as they left their native land that they threw their instruments of music away, expecting never to sing again.

Today it is my privilege to discuss with you one of the critical issues confronting democratic America from the inside. Magazines and newspapers have given sufficient publicity to this uprooting and replanting of 100,000 people, 70,000 of whom are American citizens, that there is scant necessity for any repetition of the story of the physical circumstances under which these people live. One cannot understand the significance of all this by merely seeing these barrack towns constructed and inhabited in a few short months. Anyone passing them today is almost shocked to see hundreds of fine young men who have been called neither into the armed forces of the nation nor into factories and fields where the nation also struggles for existence. He is surprised even more if he goes inside and meets such men as John Ando and Fred Mori, long time Rotarians and devoted to the ideals for which you and I live, or Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Nakano, whose fine Christian influence was planted for a time in a relocation center and is now manifest in the city of St. Louis to which they have moved. Perhaps some can grasp what this evacuation means to others if they would tarry long enough to meet Mrs. Honda, whose husband, a distinguished physician, took his own life rather than bear the stigma of evacuation; or the family of Mr. Hideo Murata who upon the day of evacuation was found in a hotel room with his dead hands clasping a certificate of honorary citizenship which he had received with pride and grateful acclaim from the citizens of his adopted city.

There is a background which makes understandable this part of our present war experience. For a long time the people in the islands across the Pacific lived in a feudal society, very much like the old South would have been if each plantation owner had had an army. There were seventy of these feudal centers scattered up and down Japan. It was a period of almost constant war that lasted several centuries. From the few conflicts in which our country has been engaged, it is easy to understand what happens to people during a war. They develop intense patriotism and definite suspicion. Such attitudes change very slowly. Japan's old society developed a military caste. These swaggering Samurai were disgusting to sensitive common people upon whom they trod. When a central government was established that military class was abolished, while in its place was instituted compulsory army service. Many people revolted against the adoption of universal militarism, and after their first great war, the Russo-Japanese War, and in the midst of the depression which followed, a great many people looked about for an opportunity to escape from that unhappy situation. There came to many of them a golden opportunity, a chance to come to the United States.

You will recall that Theodore Roosevelt was President of the United States at the time of the Russo-Japanese War. He was very pro-Japanese. He brought that war to a close in the interest of Japan. The spirit of the president was transmitted to the people so that there was developed a strong feeling of friendship and good will toward the people of Japan. One historian states that advertisements were placed in Tokyo papers saying: "Come over to the land of opportunity". The welcome was accepted in the spirit in which it was extended, and this country has indeed proven to be their land of opportunity. They came mostly from the farms, two acres in size; whereas, they now possess farms averaging 60 acres in size. They came from the middle class in which the opportunity for college education was limited indeed, while in our democratic land they have lived in the very shadows of the great universities along the coast. They have seized upon this opportunity and have sent ten times as many young people to college in proportion to their numbers as have the rest of us in America. Their record of self-support, obeying the law and paying taxes can hardly be matched by a group in the United States.

A brief reference has been made to the development of Japan from a feudal society to a modern nation ambitious for conquest. A certain development was going on in America at the same time. May we look at that picture for a moment.

The people of the United States have been engaged in the most daring and most hopeful experiment in the history of human government. The founders and early settler of America disregarded the race hatreds of Europe, more intense in that day than any race hatreds existing in the world now, and founded in this country a civilization based upon individual liberties and rights as stated in a line written by a Scotch lad who wanted to come with his neighbors to the Carolina shore:

"A Man's a man for a' that;
The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
A man's a man for a' that!"

Our country has been trying to build a civilization which offered an opportunity to every man who was willing to do his part in the fulfillment of that dream, no matter the race from which he came.

Gradually these pioneers moved westward and westward until they reached the Pacific Coast. This American tradition of disregarding race hatreds and recognizing people for what they could do enabled the early westerners to invite Chinese from Canton to come over and do the common tasks. They found that this would be easier than bringing laborers from the eastern states across Death Valley and the Rocky mountains. In the course of time it seemed sensible to open up Japan for friendliness and trade and to bring laborers from that country rather than from Canton which is 2000 miles farther on. So we went over a fleet, perfected a trade treaty, and began bringing Japanese laborers to build the railroads and develop the fields along the Pacific Coast. The fine record which these people of Japanese ancestry have made in this country has not prevented them from falling victim to the tragedy of war, even as all of us have suffered and are suffering from this unfortunate calamity. On that day of tragedy and treacherous attack on the Hawaiian Islands, December 7, 1941, these people were going about their work as usual. They closed the day in sorrow and protest against this attack from the land of their forefathers. Soon ~~they were~~ there was nervousness along the

the coast as people wondered what the Americans of Japanese ancestry would do. After a day or two, during which time there were arrests by the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the suspects whose record they already knew, life and work were resumed normally. But as weeks went by stories began to come in from Pearl Harbor, a hundred stories which were denied officially later by the F. B. I. and the Secretary of War, ~~proposed~~ the atmosphere became calm again. Evacuation began to be discussed. It was first proposed that the migration to the interior be voluntary. The people of Japanese ancestry agreed that they were willing to evacuate if it was the judgment of the nation that it was the best way for them to help America win the war. Evacuation thus began as a voluntary movement and people were sent to the middle west to lease and buy land. They were willing to put hundreds of millions of dollars into such a migration, and thus continue their work of producing food for our soldiers at the front. But the nervousness and fear created in a number of states led the governors to protest such a migration and thus there seemed to be no alternative to those commissioned to guarantee the defense of the western area but to order wholesale evacuation, which presently was carried out by the army. The Japanese people were willing to accepting evacuation, leaving their homes with what they could carry in their hands and leaving also two hundred million dollars worth of property scattered up and down that coast, created a profound impression upon the officers and soldiers who carried out these orders in the spirit of kindness. In fact, one day as we were loading one of the last groups on to Greyhound buses before starting their journey toward their new home in the desert, one strong American soldier turned to another and said, "By God, our children will rise up and curse us for what we are doing today!" That is exactly what our children will do unless we American cooperate with the government in what it is attempting to do through the War Relocation Authority.

Every American citizen ought to read with care the report of the Tolan Committee which conducted hearings along the western coast and then published its findings in government bulletins. It is easy to see that certain pressure groups carefully prepared their case for securing the expulsion of the people of Japanese ancestry from the coast. There were many reasons for this. One was military. After Pearl Harbor those commissioned to defend the west coast were not sure what they could defend. They expected Japan to attempt an invasion. If that had been tried and 10,000 parachutists in civilian clothes had been dropped down in California, it would have been a terrible situation. There was therefore some justification for getting the people of Japanese ancestry back a short distance from the coast. However, informed ~~and~~ people no longer ask whether the removal of all the Japanese people from California was necessary. Anyone who heard the Chicago University Round Table, an informed and unbiased group, two or three Sundays ago, noticed that they discussed the Japanese evacuation as a movement prompted only by race prejudice and economic rivalry.

The first generation of Japanese ~~and~~ immigrants have been transient laborers up and down the west coast. ~~Get-are-biw~~ They are now old men, and we are burrying them about two a week in the delta of Arkansas. The next generation or two entered college, bought land, developed markets, and have become more efficient truck farmers than the larger operators who have been compelled to turn to Mexicans for help. Pressure groups under the guise of patriotism and national

defense secured the removal of people with whom they could no longer compete. We southerners look with a good deal of patience upon these pressure groups and unpatriotic saboteurs, for we contend that the Republicans have been doing this ever since the Civil War -- calling in the government to help wall off a competitor. That is what we insist a tariff does.

The Japanese immigrants are criticized for huddling together along the west coast of the United States and Canada. They have. But every first generation of immigrants coming to these shores has done the same thing. It is claimed by some that the immigrants from Japan have congested less than the people from other classes and countries who have founded a little "Italy" in San Francisco and a little "~~Bheme~~" "Bohemia" in Brooklyn. It needs to be said that there is no great future for any minority group in this democracy if they huddle together. If they are unsuccessful, they will be looked down upon; if they succeed, they will be opposed by their competitors and will become a political punching-bag when some great issue like war becomes the only real issue. At such times a racial minority becomes a cheap politician's happy hunting ground.

There are a lot of funny things about this evacuation and relocation. We took people from their garden 100 miles inland from the west coast lest they blow up something and we placed them in Rohwer, Arkansas, right beside the fast freight line which carries the gasoline from Texas to New York. One of these men could make a keg of powder out of an oak stump and blow up a train, thus doing more harm in a day than he could possibly have done on his little farm.

We have kept men in concentration camps for a year for ~~teaching Japanese in~~ teaching Japanese in California schools, schools to which children came for two hours in the late afternoon, but we have given the boys who learned Japanese in those schools special encouragement to join the army and become intelligence sergeants to serve as interpreters on the battle front. Yes, we imprisoned teachers of Japanese and now are privileged to teach Japanese in relocation centers following a course of study prepared by the army, and have also introduced similar courses in the great universities of our land.

Every American needs to realize that we have thousands of young men of Japanese ancestry in the United States army, many of whom are in the far Pacific. We need to realize that the F.B.I and Secretary Stimson told the truth when they said that there was no sabotage by Japanese Americans in Hawaii. We need to realize that not a single case of sabotage has been proven against a Japanese American in California. We need to realize that politics and greed ousted these American citizens from that state. And we need to acknowledge that they have demonstrated that they are worthy to be out working in this day of peril.

The work of the War Relocation Authority, as well as the reason for the evacuation, is coming to be understood all across the country. These ten centers are not relocations in themselves. They are centers from which these people of Japanese ancestry are being relocated all across America. The army is already notifying recent volunteers among them that they are to be received into the ranks of soldiers. In all probability selective service will follow, taking several thousand young men into military establishments almost immediately. Young women will enter the women's auxiliaries, and now scores each day are going out of these centers to the farms and cities of our country to engage in work

essential to the war effort. Field offices to facilitate this movement have been established in a score of American cities. ~~The-temporarily-while-finding~~ The American Friends and other groups are maintaining hostels to which young people may go temporarily while finding jobs. Large ~~fami~~ farming groups will obtain hundreds of workers from these centers. The churches have been called the pressure group for democratic justice. They stood by these people as did no other agency during the trying days of evacuation. The church must continue to be their friend as they find their place again in American life, giving them counsel when in the midst of today's frustrations they do that which is unwise or wrong, and encouragement to press on in that which is right.

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