

## Our Japs Have Gone to Work

America's first wartime évacués, now far from the Pacific Coast, are reclaiming desert and swamp lands for Uncle Sam.

By JOHN BIRD

THE desert sun was blazing away like a flame thrower on that afternoon when the first little band of tired and dusty settlers arrived at Poston, Arizona. This frontier had seen many settlers before, but never anything like these. They came from the wrong direction—the West not the East. They were Japanese, excluded from the strategic Pacific Coast Military Area, sent here to settle in one of the Federal Government's new "relocation areas."

Here in this raw new community springing up in the desert wilderness, these first migrating families and thousands to come after them would be living for the duration under military protection. A new city was being built for them, and they would be provided with the basic essentials of life—food, shelter, medical attention, and an opportunity to work. But they were told it was up to them to do the rest, to make what they could out of this new land.

The settlers looked at the jungle of tough greasewood, mesquite and cacti that must be cleared, at the thousands of acres that must be leveled, worked and reworked before anything could be planted; they shaded their slant eyes to gaze over the heat-shimmering distances where canals must be dug to bring water to make this land produce. And Shigeru Imamura, their spokesman, said: "Sure we can do it. Our parents, and later we *Nisei*, helped make the Imperial Valley's wastelands into one of the greatest winter gardens in America. We can do the same here."

Shigeru Imamura may not have realized it, but he was keynoting a significant transition in the West—the closing of one colorful episode and the opening of another that may be even more exciting. As he spoke that day more than 112,000 people of Japanese descent were leaving their garden plots, vineyards and orchards, their stores and jobs, and were moving inland. They are now tackling jobs of land development and other useful projects, and perhaps in the process may work themselves out of one of the toughest predicaments that ever faced any people in the American melting pot.

Poston, Arizona, now the home address for Shigeru and 20,000 other évacués and the third largest city in Arizona, wasn't on any map a few months ago. It was just a spot in the desert on the Colorado River Indian Reservation down in the southwestern corner of Arizona. The desert around Poston had wonderful possi-

bilities, as one of the largest blocks of undeveloped but potentially productive land in the West. All it needed to become a garden spot was water, and lots and lots of work. Last year the U. S. Indian Service completed the Headgate Rock Dam on the Colorado River, making water available for 70,000 to 80,000 acres on the reservation. But before the long and tedious job of actually getting the water to the land could be accomplished, Uncle Sam decided he needed the money for airplanes, tanks, bombs and ships.

Poston might have remained a blank spot in the desert, inhabited only by rattlesnakes and lizards, if the Army had not decided that the Japanese would have to leave the Pacific Coast. When worried Federal officials were looking around for a safe place for the swarm of Japanese on their hands, this spot looked like a natural for some of them. It was isolated, safe, and bristling with opportunities for really worth-while work. So the raw land was leased from the Indians. It will be used by the évacués for the duration of the war, and will be returned in improved condition when peace comes.

Poston is just one example. Right now nearly a dozen such new settlements are built or building. They range from the eastern edge of Military Area No. 1 to the Mississippi Delta. Before the snow flies these new communities will house nearly 90 per cent of the Japanese in the United States.

To get the full story of these strange new cities, the weird exodus that caused them to spring up, and the kind of people involved, you have to track back briefly to the Pacific Coast, where for nearly two generations the Japanese immigrants and their American-born children have been intermeshed in business, trade, and particularly agriculture. The Japanese first started coming to the West Coast in large numbers around the turn of the century. For the most part these immigrants were farm workers, "stoop" laborers, needed in

the expansion of intensive irrigated crops. The immigration was restricted in 1907 by the gentlemen's agreement between Japan and the United States, and was stopped by the Exclusion Act of 1924. In 1940 the census showed 126,000 Japanese in the country. More than 90 per cent of these lived on the West Coast, and nearly half were farm people.

This was the situation on December seventh, when the Pacific Coast suddenly realized that its melting pot, into which had poured Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos, had suddenly become a keg of nitroglycerin. Military necessity, the sternest of all taskmasters, decreed the Japanese had to evacuate the entire coastal area. The prohibited zone extended from Mexico to Canada and about 100 miles inland from the coast. Those exclusion orders affected most of the Japanese in the United States. More than 112,000 of them lived in Military Area 1. And surprising to most folks is the fact that nearly two thirds of the évacués are U. S. citizens, with the same constitutional rights that

you and I enjoy. Of those leaving the prohibited zones, 71,000 are *Nisei*—American-born. Forty-one thousand are *Issei*—aliens. The *Issei* for the most part are the parents and grandparents who came to America before immigration was restricted. Most of them are, or have been, farmers.

The *Nisei* are the second generation, most of them born here after 1907; their average age is 22, and most of them have been educated in American schools. Like other young folks, they have been drawn cityward; this is one of the reasons that Japanese-operated farm acreage has declined steadily since 1920.

Migrations of families, of whole communities, are not new. They are an old, old story in Europe and Asia, where wars and economic and social pressures from time to time have caused whole classes of people, like seeds from an exploding pod, to scatter to the four corners of the earth.

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Thousands of acres of raw land are being tamed for gardens by Jap évacués.



# A Special Wartime Message to U. S. Hog Producers From the Secretary of Agriculture



Scenes like this have multiplied all over the country this year as the nation's hog farmers responded to the wartime call for more pork and lard. There will be 18,500,000 more hogs on farms this year than ever before, and the new war job is to market them evenly.



By truck and by train we will be pouring into the markets this year a fourth more hogs than last year. The usual marketing peak will have to be spread out this year to avoid overloading the packing plants and the transportation system during December and January.



We'll need all the pork and lard we can get, especially this summer and early fall—a big reason for early marketing. The government hog-price support of 85 per cent of parity is assurance of good price, but the heavy demand for early hogs promises better prices.



For fighting men and workers, high-protein foods are needed for peak efficiency. The hog producers on American farms are the ones who can do the most right now to give us and our allies of the United Nations increasing command of the food front in this war.

Here begins our new contribution to the war effort of American agriculture: A page each month set aside by Country Gentleman for the United States Department of Agriculture, in which the leaders of the Food for Freedom program can speak directly to the farmers of our country. Look for the page, written and edited by the USDA every month for the duration of the war, in Country Gentleman. —The Editors.



THERE is no doubt about the farmers' response to the wartime call for more hogs. We will have 18,500,000 more hogs on farms this year than ever before. The next war job for hog producers is to push as many hogs as possible for early marketing. We need more pork this summer and early fall and we must start the heavy run of hogs to market earlier in order to avoid marketing difficulties. We have eight million more hogs to market this fall and winter than we had last year, and close to six million more than we have ever marketed in the period from October first to April thirtieth.

Normally, the peak months for hog marketing are December and January. If farmers should attempt to market in December and January the normal percentage of this year's increased supply, it would be too much for the packing plants and the transportation system.

We can't look to increased packing-plant capacity and more trucks and railroad livestock cars to handle a greater peak marketing load. That would take more steel and more rubber for tires,

both of which are needed to build war machines. We must therefore plan to market more hogs early so as to avoid some of the rush later. And we don't have to worry about the price this year, especially early in the season.

The Government is now buying about 40 per cent of the pork and about two thirds of the lard. It is probable that for a year beginning next October the Government will be buying as much as 30 per cent of the pork and half of the lard. For the United States and the United Nations we want all the pork and lard we can get.

This war is being fought with many weapons and food is one of the most important. Hog producers can do the most right now to increase the nation's meat supply. They can help the war program by producing more hogs and by marketing more hogs as early as possible.

*Claude R. Wickard*  
SECRETARY

## Let's Talk Things Over

Secretary Wickard's desk calendar every Friday now bears this notation: "Speak on National Farm and Home Hour, 12:30 p.m." (that's Eastern War Time).

This is why, in his own words: "While I was at my farm recently I started to fix a piece of fence to keep the pigs from getting out. Pretty soon my neighbors came around and began asking questions about what was going on in Washington, and about some of the things the Department of Agriculture was doing. Talking over these problems was helpful to me and I hope it was of help to my neighbors too. That is the kind of talk I have in mind for these Friday broadcasts."

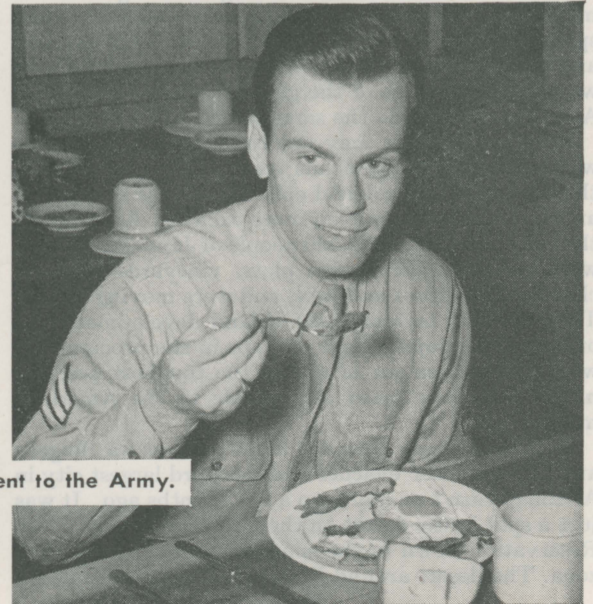
Every Friday at 12:30 p.m. on the National Farm and Home Hour.



U. S. D. A. PHOTOS BY FORSYTHE



These little pigs went to the Army.





## Our Japs Have Gone to Work

(Continued from Page 7)

But this migration is different. It has not been a formless exodus of people sent scurrying over the landscape in search of a place to land. It started out that way, and the first few thousand Japs who left the prohibited zones promptly ran into all kinds of trouble in strange territory and with strange people. It became apparent, then, that in wartime the nation couldn't risk the strains and stresses of a helter-skelter dispersal. So on March eighteenth, President Roosevelt established the War Relocation Authority to co-operate with the Army in carrying out wholesale movement of the Japanese, and to provide new, Federally supervised communities where évacués can live in safety and do useful work. On March twenty-ninth, voluntary migration of évacués from the military zone was "frozen." It was announced that henceforth all évacués would first go to temporary "assembly centers," until moved by the Army to suitable relocation areas.

What these military orders meant in terms of action was clear enough—the Japs had to go. But what they mean in terms of future West Coast agriculture is something that won't be known for sure for some time to come. It is certain that with the Japs gone, the complexion and total farm output of the Pacific Coast region is in for a change. California in particular is going to have to make some difficult readjustments.

Altogether, in 1940 Japanese farm operators on the West Coast controlled about 6000 farms, totaling 258,000 acres. Five thousand of these farms were in California with a total of 226,000 acres. The average Japanese farmer operated about forty-three acres.

These figures don't mean much until you see the kind of acres they have been farming and the terrifically high-value production they can pack into an acre. These Japanese farms were valued in 1940 at more than \$72,000,000. Roughly, that means \$11,800 per farm—better than \$270 an acre. The average gross income of these mighty-midget farms has been nearly \$7000 a year.

### Specialized in Truck

Or, to look at it another way: Japanese have grown more than a third of California's truck crops, particularly those requiring days on end of patient, delicate handwork. In some crops they have specialized almost to the point of monopoly. Almost all strawberries in California have grown under Japanese hands. They have been producing at least 80 per cent of California's beans, celery, peas, cucumbers, peppers; 75 per cent of the garlic, 60 per cent of the market tomatoes, spinach, and cauliflower. Most important from the standpoint of total food production are canning tomatoes, of which they have normally produced 35 to 45 per cent.

The Japanese are being sorely missed, too, in the poultry industry, where they enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the fine art of chick sexing. They played an important part in the distribution of fresh vegetables, and they had a \$2,500,000 stake in the flower and shrub business.

To see what was happening, and to find out how the Japanese and other farmers were taking it, I drove through much of the California truck-garden country just before the mass migration started. This is the land of "stoop"

labor, where much of the field work is done on the hands and knees, and where weeds are picked with tweezers from among tiny vegetable seedlings.

In the Santa Clara Valley I stopped beside a small garlic field in which several men and women were working. "Is this your farm?" I asked the eldest man. He shook his head and pointed to a girl working down the row. "She tell you, please," he said. "She talk better."

He was right. Her English was excellent, without a trace of accent. Her smile was infectious. She was, I found out, 22 years old, a high-school graduate, and her name was "Kimiye," which means "myself" in Japanese.

### "Equipments" Left

"The farm is in my brother's name," she told me. "Our parents are *Issei* so they can't own land under the Alien Land Laws. We—the whole family—went together to buy this farm. It's twenty acres." She kept on working as she talked, loosening the earth around each plant and pulling out stray weeds.

"Your brother—where is he?"

"He's at the service office seeing the Government men. About selling the farm."

"You are going to sell? Why don't you lease it?"

"Well, we don't want to sell, really. The mortgage is about half paid off. If we leave—I mean when we leave—we might not be able to meet the payments. Everything is so uncertain."

"Have you any good offers?"

"Well, not what we think are good enough." Then she brightened. "If we don't have to go until after the crops are harvested, we could make a big payment on the mortgage. Maybe then we —"

She left the sentence unfinished because a formation of wasplike fighting planes, their propeller arcs glistening in the sun, came climbing over and shook the earth. When the noise faded, she smiled automatically and politely. "But I guess we won't be able to stay very much longer. We are so close to the air base."

A few miles down the road I talked with Henry Mitarai, a leading Japanese farmer. He's not typical because he's far more successful and articulate than most.

In 17 years Henry has climbed the long ladder from wage hand to operator of a 1000-acre vegetable farm, with \$50,000 worth of farm machinery and a pay roll running as high as \$38,000 a year. He's 36 years old.

When I dropped in, he was directing his men at the job of cleaning up machinery. Row on row of equipment was lined up and shining with green and yellow paint. "Getting ready to evacuate," he told me. "I want all these equipments to be in first-class shape when I leave."

I started to count the "equipments." There were five big crawler tractors, five wheel tractors, eight large vegetable trucks, six different kinds of planters, equipment for washing, grading and packing vegetables, and—I gave up counting and simply noted "numerous cultivators, diggers, plows, etc."

Henry was born in this community, where his father came in 1880 as a laborer and worked up to the status of ranch manager. Henry was the first of his race to graduate from Santa Clara high school, and followed this up by going to the University of Illinois to study



"Take our duck hunting for example. Lots of fellows won't get out at all this season. But whether a man's at home, or away on duty, he can figure on coming back to the marsh later on.

"That duck blind will still be waiting for him and his pal. There'll be that same familiar rustling of the marsh grasses. And a long flight of plump mallards slanting down wind into range.

"You know, I expect most hunting and shooting will be a lot better by then, too. Game will be more plentiful. And the continuing research for improvement ought to make our ammunition better than ever.

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**PETERS PACKS THE POWER**



engineering. However, his money ran short and he came back to the Valley, where he worked for two years in the fields. Then in 1925, convinced of what he could do with farm machinery, he took a gamble and leased a run-down 243-acre dairy ranch. He leveled the land, put down wells, and started growing vegetables in a big way. Through the years he expanded his holding, always on a cash-lease basis, paying \$25 to \$35 an acre annually, until he was operating more than 1000 acres in sugar beets, spinach, broccoli, peas, Lima beans, pole beans, cucumbers, and miscellaneous truck.

"How do you feel about leaving all this?" I asked him.

"Well, it's a bad break, but it's something that has to be done, I guess. There are some bad apples in any barrel. What I'm most interested in right now is leaving here in good shape, so nobody can say we were slackers. I'm chairman of our Japanese American Citizens League in this community, and I told all our members to stick to their work right up to the minute we have to leave. The country needs this production. I told them we should have our fields all ready so that when the new people come in they can keep the crops right on going.

"Most of all, I hope that wherever we go there will be work to do. Our people are hard workers, and this is no time to be sitting around idle."

#### Production Declines

Down in the Sacramento Delta country, a land of labor camps and huge vegetable ranches, white owners were frankly panicky at losing their skilled Jap labor. "We were offered \$265,000 for our ranch a year ago," an official of a corporation farm told me. "Wish we had taken it, because we can't earn on that value if we lose our Jap crews we have trained for ten and fifteen years." Another, one of the nation's largest celery producers, forecast: "A lot of our land will be idle. We just won't be able to farm all of it."

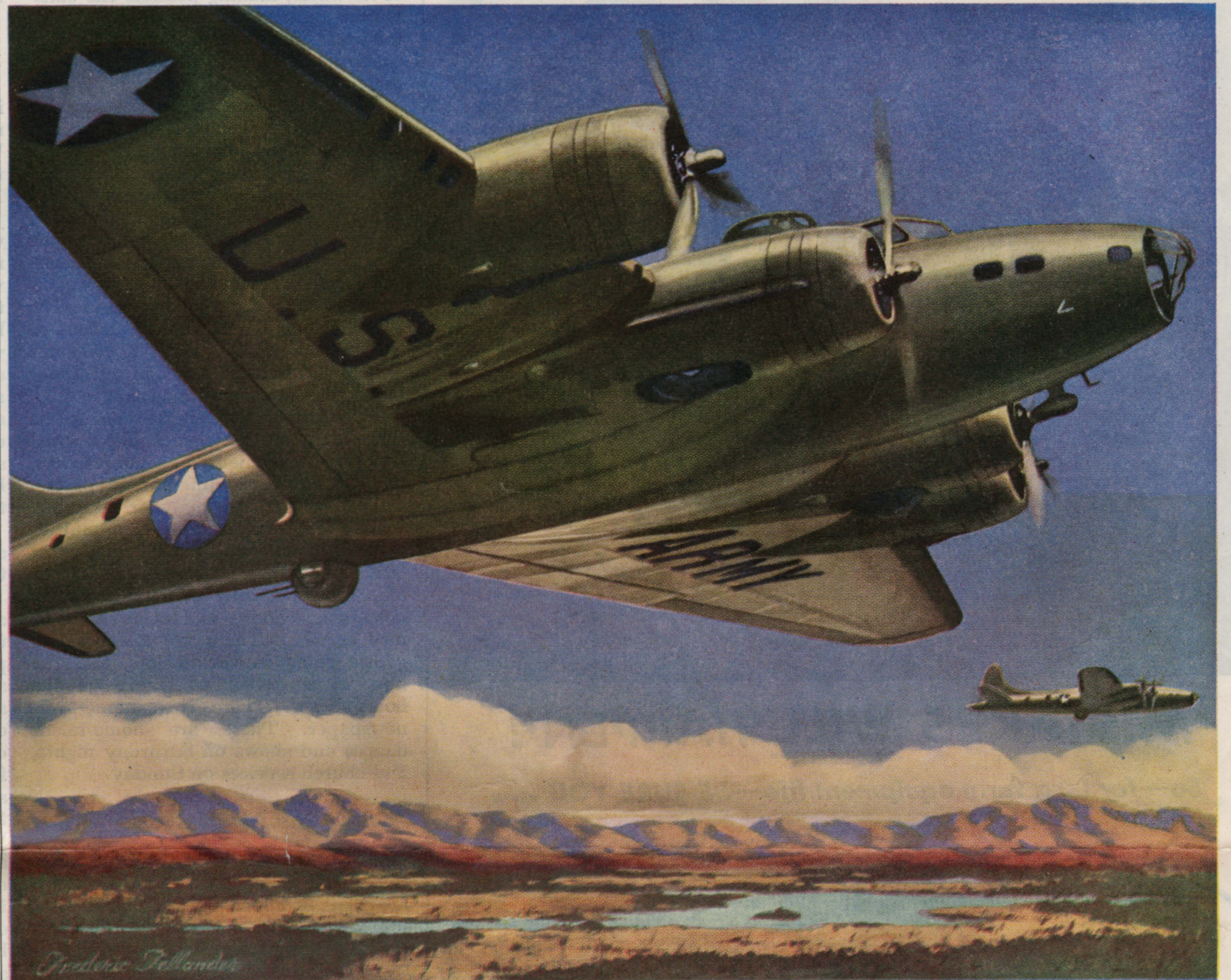
The Farm Security Administration was given the tough job of trying to replace the Japanese on West Coast farms, and at the last report they had found operators for all but 300 vacated farms. But . . . "the incoming operators and managers cannot in the immediate future be expected to maintain the level of production characteristic of the Japanese operators," says the USDA Bureau of Agricultural Economics. An unofficial guess places the decline in production on vacated farms at 10 to 20 per cent this year.

Will the sudden uprooting and transplanting of a whole segment of the West Coast population be one of those necessary dead losses of war? Certainly the losses will be large. But there will be some credit items on the ledger. How large these credits grow seems to lie pretty largely in the future of the new communities.

The sites for these new towns and farming communities were carefully selected to give them the best odds for success. While the Japanese were still settling their affairs on the Coast, the War Relocation Authority had crews of engineers, soil, water and crop experts combing the country for promising relocation areas—the kind that would enable the évacués to put their skills and talents to work for the good of the country.

As a result, Jap farmers who helped subdue California's Sacramento Delta are now clearing, draining and subdividing cutover lands in the Mississippi Delta to bring this rich black soil into

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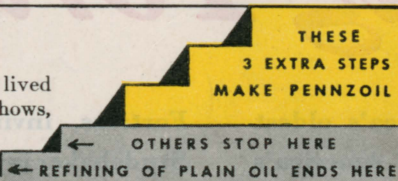


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the production of long-staple cotton, soybeans, alfalfa, and a variety of vegetables. In the Owens River Valley in Eastern California Jap évacués are operating a guayule nursery, and are working toward a 3000-acre vegetable garden. In Southern Idaho they are lining a main canal that used to lose nearly half of its water, making possible the cultivation of an additional 30,000 acres in the area. These are just samples of the constructive agricultural work being undertaken by the évacués.

Altogether, the various relocation projects have about 11,000 acres of land in vegetables this season, which goes a long way toward cutting down Uncle Sam's grocery bill for his new wards. By the 1943 season, 90,000 acres of land are scheduled for cropping, and the évacués will be producing food for Lend-Lease and the Army and Navy in addition to supplies for their own tables. The War Relocation Authority estimates that ultimately 200,000 to 220,000 acres of land can be reclaimed and put under plow on the areas now approved.

The communities being established on these areas are very much like normal American settlements in some respects, and astoundingly different in others. Take Poston, Arizona, for example. There are really three communities around Poston, one of 10,000 and two of 5000. The évacués vote, elect their own officials, have their own police force, hospitals, schools, and other community services. There are kid baseball games going in vacant lots, and the housewives gather to gossip on the house steps. There is a home-town newspaper. There are home-talent dances and shows on Saturday nights, and church services on Sunday.

### Plenty of Work

And work! There is plenty of that. Canals are being dug, lateral systems are being laid out, land is being leveled, drainage ditches are being installed, as the desert is pushed back to bring 15,000 acres into crops by 1943, and 75,000 in years to come. Factories are being started, largely handicraft shops, and these, too, are turning their immediate attention to supplying the community with furniture, clothing and work equipment. Also they are turning out articles that help the national production effort, such as netting, leather goods, gloves, and so on.

The differences between Poston and a normal community are more striking than the similarities. For one thing, the whole relocation district is a military area under the protection of military police, and everyone, white or brown, has to have a pass to enter or leave. But don't get the idea that Poston or any other relocation community is a concentration camp, or that évacués are "interned." As a group the residents here are not accused of disloyalty, or of any overt acts against the national security. There may be some "bad apples" among them, but you can count on the G-men to take care of them as soon as suspected.

No matter what their former social or

financial standing, all évacué families at Poston have the same simple quarters. The rich merchant who lived in a mansion and the fisherman who lived in a hovel on Terminal Island have the same kind of 20' by 25' apartment in the barrackslike houses. Each occupant can improve his own quarters as much as he wishes by his own work.

### A Chance to Earn

Those who want to work and earn income may enlist temporarily in an unusual new organization called the War Relocation Work Corps—something like the CCC. Any évacué over 16 years of age, regardless of sex, may join. Corps members don't receive wages, as such. But each enlistee does receive a small monthly cash "advance" to buy the miscellaneous items that can't very well be issued on routine basis. An unskilled worker gets an advance of \$12 a month; semiskilled, \$16; and professionals, \$19. These advances are to be repaid only if the whole project makes a profit. Frankly, the chances of much net income, at least in the early stages of such projects, are rather slim because of the work which must be done to get production under way.

The question most frequently asked about the Japanese évacués is, "Are they loyal to this country?"

That is a question that no one can answer, because it simply isn't possible to prejudge the loyalty of 126,000 people, or to measure the strength of blood and culture ties. Certainly, the *Nisei* as a group were far along in the process of Americanization. Several thousands of them are serving in the U. S. armed forces. Many of them have invested their savings and the money received from the liquidation of their property in U. S. War Bonds. The *Issei* as a class are old and illiterate, and seem more baffled and confused than anything else. The few thousand *Kibei*—American-born, but educated in Japan—are generally trusted by no one. And undoubtedly wily agents of Japan used this whole complicated mixture of people as protective coloration to hide their espionage and fifth-column work.

However, it is certain that the évacués as a group are co-operating wholeheartedly with the government in the relocation program. Their leadership, mostly *Nisei*, sees the whole exodus as a stern test of their people.

"We've got to prove we're Americans," one of their young leaders told me. "We can't do it with words—maybe we can do it with work."

### Ada the Ayrshire

