

Comments by the War Relocation Authority
On Statements Reported in the Press
Allegedly Made by Witnesses
Before the Committee on Un-American Activities
During Hearings in Los Angeles Between
June 8 and June 17.

1.

Statements reported by the United Press in a dispatch from Los Angeles dated June 16 and allegedly made before the subcommittee hearings by Mayor Fletcher Bowron of Los Angeles.

Statement: "...the nation's most dangerous Japanese, according to a Los Angeles police report, was released from the Poston Relocation Center without ever having been confined there and now is working in a boys' camp in the middle West. The Japanese, Kiyoshi Okura, former member of the Los Angeles Civil Service Commission, belonged to numerous Japanese organizations, and, although he professed to be a Presbyterian, was married in a Shinto Temple."

Comment: Our records show that Mr. Okura was released by the War-time Civil Control Administration from the Santa Anita Assembly Center on November 1, 1942 to go to Boys' Town Nebraska. He has never resided at Poston or any other relocation center and has never been under the jurisdiction of the War Relocation Authority at any time.

Statement: Another Japanese released under questionable circumstances was Miya S. Kikuchi, taken from Manzanar Relocation Center for a lecture tour under the auspices of the National YMCA.

Comment: Mrs. Kikuchi was released from the Manzanar Relocation Center on short-term leave in October 1942. She was absent from the center only two weeks and is still residing there at the present time.

2.

Statements allegedly made at hearings by Earl A. Best, the former Assistant Steward at the Heart Mountain and Poston Relocation Centers, and reported by the Los Angeles Times on June 17.

Statement: At Poston fresh milk was ordered for all, even though it cost an estimated \$2,000 a day and the evacuees seemed satisfied with evaporated milk. Project Director Head ordered the fresh milk as "we do not need money to win the war."

Comment: In a teletype message dated June 22, Project Director Head has the following comment to make regarding the statement allegedly made by Mr. Best:

"Only conversation with Best regarding fresh milk was on purchase of same. He said that canned milk could be used and my answer to that was that canned milk could be shipped to our troops, where fresh milk could not and that the small additional cost of fresh milk did not hinder the war effort. It was also pointed out that fresh milk would be purchased on government contract only and would come from surplus of Imperial Valley and other nearby areas in California. The amount to be ordered was 3600 quarts per day at 46 cents per gallon or a total of \$414.00 per day. This milk was to be given only to children up to 12 years of age, expectant and nursing mothers, and invalids."

Statement: During an inventory conducted at the Heart Mountain Relocation center, it was discovered that evacuee mess hall workers were hoarding large quantities of food in attics and secret store-rooms.

Comment: During September, October and November of 1942, when much of the initial supplies and equipment were being received at Heart Mountain Center, the Center was short of storage space. As a temporary expedient, staple foods were issued to the mess halls in excess of current needs in order to utilize mess hall space for storage purposes. In a large number of mess halls attic space was used for this purpose. In two mess halls, supplementary store rooms were constructed. These are the so-called secret store-rooms to which Mr. Best refers. Since they were so constructed as to occupy ground floor space in the middle of the mess halls, they were in no way concealed.

Shortly before Mr. Best reported to Heart Mountain as Assistant Steward, a new Chief Steward was employed. He ordered the general inventory to which Mr. Best refers in his statements. He concluded that the storage of food in mess halls should be discontinued but decided to reduce the stocks in the mess halls not by moving them back to the warehouses but by reducing future issues so that in the course of a few weeks the stocks would be reduced by normal consumption. His decision in this matter was carried out. By the time our investigation was made early in April, in only two mess halls were substantial quantities of food still stored in attics. In four others, small amounts were on hand. These food stuffs were removed to the warehouses following the investigation.

This was in no sense a secret hoarding of food by the Japanese. All foods issued to the mess halls were charged to them at the time of issuance and all came within the cash ration allowance of 45 cents per day -- except in September when the initial stocks were issued. In September the ration cost averaged $46\frac{1}{2}$ cents per person per day. During the first three months in 1943, the reduction of mess hall stocks by the method adopted by the Project Steward was reflected in ration costs which averaged from 35 to 37 cents per person per day.

Statement: An evacuee mess hall worker at the Heart Mountain Center traded liquor for hams and other food.

Comment: Mr. Best has no actual evidence that transactions involving exchange of food for whiskey have ever been carried out. We have checked as completely as possible all the information supplied us by Mr. Best in a signed statement on this subject and have found little specifically supporting his charges.

One local farmer who had a contract to remove garbage from a few of the mess halls acknowledges that at Christmas time he purchased small quantities of liquor for a few of the chefs. He insists he used money supplied by them and made no profit on the transaction. Although we have no other evidence contradicting his statements, he has been ordered not to conduct such transaction in the future.

It is the policy of the Authority to enforce those liquor regulations which under State and Federal law are generally applicable to the territory in which a specific center is located. An evacuee given leave for other purposes might buy liquor and bring it into the Heart Mountain Center or any evacuee might order liquor by mail. We have, however, had surprisingly little difficulty with the liquor problem on any center. There has been so little evident drinking that we think the present policy has demonstrated its soundness.

3.

Statements reported by the Associated Press in a dispatch from Los Angeles dated June 12 and allegedly made before hearings of the Subcommittee by Norris E. James, former Reports Officer at the Poston Relocation Center.

Statement: Boulder and Parker dams are in constant danger of sabotage from residents of the Poston Relocation Center.

Comment: Parker Dam is situated approximately 30 miles up the Colorado River from the Poston Relocation Center and Boulder Dam lies nearly 75 miles farther up stream. No evacuee at Poston or any other relocation center is permitted to leave the outside boundaries without a permit at any time. After dark, no evacuee is permitted even to leave the confines of the community proper without a permit. The exterior boundaries of the center are guarded by a company of military police and have been ever since the center was first established.

Statement: Trouble began at camp last fall after Poston had received 365 Japanese regarded by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as potentially dangerous from internment camps in North Dakota and New Mexico.

Comment: Any person of Japanese ancestry who is transferred from an internment camp to a relocation center has appeared before a hearing board in the internment camp and has been paroled under the regular procedures of the Department of Justice.

Statement: ".....the leaders of the strike emerged as leaders of Poston Camp No. 1.

Comment: All the evidence we have available indicates that present leaders of Poston Camp No. 1 were among those most active in trying to prevent the strike.

4.

Statement reported by the AP in the dispatch from Los Angeles dated June 10 and allegedly made before Committee hearing by Harold H. Townsend, former Chief Supply and Transportation Officer at the Poston Relocation Center.

Statement: "They (i.e. the evacuees at Poston) stated that they were hoarding food, bread and other supplies for parachute troops and for invasion forces....they had large caches of food throughout the desert buried that could be used for similar purposes.

"....that camp (i.e. Poston Relocation Center) is 100 percent of the idea that Japan will have the United States in a few months. There are over 1,000 Japanese soldiers and Japanese officers in that camp. They tell you right off that they were going to win the war and that is the type of man who is drilling almost daily in military tactics right under our noses in that camp. They drill them in various ways, but still drill them, and they are making soldiers out of them and they are not kidding about it. They don't even presume to hide it."

Comment: We have no evidence to support these charges beyond the statements attributed to Mr. Townsend who was discharged from the Poston Center for incompetence and whose entire testimony before the subcommittee is shot through with inaccuracies, distortions, and downright mis-statements of fact. The charges were never brought to the attention of project authorities while Mr. Townsend was on duty at Poston but were made for the first time at the subcommittee hearings in Los Angeles -- nearly six months after Mr. Townsend had left the center.

Statement: During a riot at the Poston Center last November, the Japanese flag was hoisted on a pole in front of the jail. Loud speakers stolen from the warehouse, were installed and the Japanese National anthem was heard throughout the camp, "with loud cheers and demonstrations toward setting fire to the whole camp". Meanwhile "the poor simpleton cowering Caucasian employees stood around like whipped children lucky to be spared and allowed to live from hour to hour." The ambulances were filled with disguised soldiers with machine guns guarding their sleep so they would not be slaughtered or burned, as was threatened."

Comment: This statement is almost completely without foundation. There was no riot at the Poston Center. In November, there was a strike and demonstration which involved no violence or destruction of government property. Sworn affidavits from 61 people (members of the project staff and their families) indicate that these people, who were in residence at the project throughout the entire period of the demonstration, were at no time in fear of bodily injury or any act of violence. Other affidavits from the Internal Security Officer at the Project and a Catholic missionary priest who was present during the demonstration categorically deny that any Japanese flag was raised or that Japanese march music was played over the public address system.

at any time. The demonstration was on the whole, an orderly one and never involved the disruption of vital community services such as hospitalization and mess operations.

Statement: "Cases of milk were dumped and cartons of milk thrown at anyone on the highway and around the camp.... The milk came in every night during this riot and the rioters took the trucks and ice cream and other supplies that came into the camp, took them right over to their lines."

Comment: This statement is wholly untrue.

Statement: The food served to the Japanese at Poston is "superior in every way....about 25 percent better"than they give the United States Army.

Comment: From the standpoint of quality, the food served at Poston Relocation Center is and always has been equal or inferior to that served in the U. S. Army. It has never been superior. From the standpoint of quantity, the food served at Poston is probably about 25 percent less than that served at Army training camps and cantonment throughout the United States.