

Colorado River War Relocation Project  
Poston, Arizona

CONVERSATION BETWEEN W. WADE HEAD, PROJECT DIRECTOR, AND H. H. TOWNSEND,  
SUPPLY AND TRANSPORTATION OFFICER, ON DECEMBER 1, 1942.

- Head - Good morning, Mr. Townsend
- Townsend - Good morning. I just got your memorandum and want to discuss it with you. Please let me apologize for my actions during the strike. I must have been so upset I didn't realize what I was doing. I was afraid that I and the other employees were going to be slaughtered by the Japs.
- Head - Mr. Townsend, if you do not mind, I am going to have notes kept on this conversation, inasmuch as your actions of the last few days have been such that they cause me to doubt your honesty and reliability. Do you object?
- Townsend - I don't blame you for wanting a record of everything I have to say.
- Head - Now, Mr. Townsend, you said you were frightened; did you actually see, personally, any signs of violence on the part of the people or the destruction of any government property.
- Townsend - Since having time to calm down I realize that there was no sign of violence, and now that the trouble has been settled and I have had time to look around, it is easy to see the crowd must have been peaceful all the time and there was no sign of any damage to any government property.
- Head - Do you consider that sufficient reason for leaving the project and failing your duties during the time of trouble?
- Townsend - I don't know what I meant. I lost my head I guess. I would have done more harm here than good (good) in that condition.
- Head - I think you have done more harm than good here ever since you came, and in the past few days it has been reported to me that you have been frightened ever since arriving, and that you have always carried a gun.
- Townsend - I think every employee here should be armed at all times.
- Head - If you think that, you absolutely have no business working here. This is no place for cowards nor unstable people. Besides, every government employee who places more importance on his own safety than his duty to the government is not fit to work for Uncle Sam. You were not only disloyal to your job, you were disloyal to John Evans, and disloyalty was displayed before all the project employees when he was in charge and was working under tremendous pressure. By the way, did you leave Poston in a government car?
- Townsend - Yes, I went to Parker in a government car and from there I caught a ride with a friend to Los Angeles.



Head - I am extremely disappointed to find we have had an employee working here like you. It is easy to understand why you might have become upset, but I cannot understand why you became frightened and fled. You had a responsibility to the government to look after its property. We have employed you in a responsible position and put our confidence in you to carry out that job, then you fail completely; and besides, look at the men here with their families who were not afraid. Ralph's wife was here alone. She had planned to go to Phoenix for the weekend but when the sitdown strike started, she immediately saw that her duty was here, and she stayed. She is not a government employee but she is a loyal American. Other men and their wives stayed with their children. To me, just at a time when you were most needed, you absolutely failed.

Townsend - I guess I can't blame you for feeling that way.

Head - I am sorry to say this, but never have I been so disappointed with a fellow employee as I have been with you. You insisted that the Army be called in, not because you thought that was best, but because you were afraid. "Yellow" is a good word for it. That would have been an easy way to settle this thing. Thank God, John Evans was not a coward. He displayed real character when he refused to follow your and a few other crackpots' advice. I want you and everyone else in the country to know that John Evans has my complete confidence and backing in every decision he made while here. If John had thought it was necessary to call the Army into Poston to protect government property or human lives, he would have done so, but at no time did he feel it was necessary. You can see now, from events, that it wasn't. Had the Army come in, no doubt there would have been some people shot. Our government knew what it was doing when it put these people here, and you know yourself that the strike wasn't due to anybody in jail, but due to the fact that we had failed to furnish some of the minimum necessities of life to them such as heating stoves and many other items and we would have been a bunch of cowards in taking advantage of them by marching the Army in and having defenseless people shot. There are many reasons he could not outline to you why the Army should not have been called in; I think it is unnecessary in your case to do it. I want to point out that the Japanese have many thousands of American prisoners and if anything happened here in which the Japanese would be shot or otherwise hurt, retaliation would no doubt have been taken against the various Americans held as Japanese prisoners.

Townsend - I see now that Evans was right; he was level headed.

Head - After your actions during this disturbance, as far as I'm concerned it is too late in the day for you to change. To be perfectly fair and frank with you, I want you to know you would not have been allowed to return to this project had not John Evans recommended it to me, but I am convinced in my own mind that it was a mistake.



Townsend - Would you like to have me hand in my resignation?

Head - Personally, I think you should, but probably it will be better inasmuch as you are working with Empie, that you discuss the matter with him. My personal feeling in this is that although you might do a good job in some other position, you are too emotionally unstable to work on a project like this. Anyone who will carry a gun and who will go around trying to frighten the employees by telling them they are not safe, has no business working here.

Townsend - I wish you could have seen how upset and disturbed I was and I think you could see my side.

Head - I have no more to say to you except this; you became emotionally upset and unstable at the time your services were most needed, so you have no business here. Mr. Townsend, in all the years I have worked, you are the first employee I have felt it was necessary to call a stenographer in to take notes on the conversation, and you realize as well as I, why I feel this is necessary.

This is an exact copy of the conversation  
between Mr. W. Wade Head and Mr. H. H.  
Townsend.

/s/ Henriette S. Johnson  
Henriette S. Johnson  
Secretary to Project Director