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Released for May 18, 1942

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THE BOTTLENECK IN JAPANESE RESETTLEMENT

The evacuation of 110,000 residents of Japanese lineage from the West Coast will soon be history. The process has involved serious sacrifice on the part of the evacuees, many of whom, on any view of the situation, are innocent persons. Two-thirds of them are American citizens, the deprivation of whose rights would not in normal times be tolerated. The evacuation has been executed by military and civil officials with consideration for those involved.

The pressing question now is: How can resettlement be carried out so as to contribute to winning the war, while doing a minimum of violence to our democratic ideals? The answer should enable the evacuees to make the largest possible contribution to national production and unity during the war; should restore their self-respect and the respect for them of the general public; and should facilitate their reincorporation into American life after the war.

The Western Defense Command, under General DeWitt, has endeavored to fulfill these conditions. To that end, until March 29, the Command encouraged voluntary evacuation of the Japanese into inland states. But on that date General DeWitt forbade further voluntary evacuation. The reason given by members of his staff was that he feared lest the evacuees suffer physical violence on account of the strong hostility to them exhibited in many communities east of Military Area No. 1.

The bottleneck in resettlement, therefore, is opposition in certain localities to the coming of even a few Japanese to settle in their midst. Until the mass of Americans is convinced that such opposition is an impediment to winning the war and a violation of American ideals, the policy of wide dispersal must remain in suspense, being replaced by concentration in Settlements under military guard. That this is economically wasteful and socially unsound is evident from the following contrasts.

Economically: In the Settlements, on wild land, they must be fed for many months before crops can be sown, at a cost of \$60,000 a day, and the devising of work for the more than half who are not farmers will be difficult. If scattered in normal communities, they would help meet the labor shortage, would at once be self-supporting, would increase war production, and the non-farmers could find city jobs.

Socially: In the Settlements, they will be insulated from normal life, their American character diluted by segregation, a danger especially dreaded by the younger generation, citizens born. The stigma of suspicion will cling to all of them. In normal communities, they would enjoy free association with other Americans, their faith in democratic fair play would be confirmed, and their self-respect would be restored, so that after the war they could fit smoothly into American life.

It is thus evident that the economic and social losses imposed on the nation by segregation are serious. Yet presumably patriotic citizens, through thoughtlessness or prejudice, are causing these losses by their unwillingness to allow Japanese, even though citizens, to settle near them.

As soon as such opposition abates, so that it is safe for Japanese to be abroad, the War Relocation Authority can release them from the guarded Settlements, and resume the policy of scattering them in hundreds of inland communities. Precautions should, of course, be taken by the Authority to release only persons against whom the Authority and the F. B. I. have no grounds of suspicion, and preference should be given to American-born citizens, educated in our schools and colleges. The Authority should also require state and local officials and private agencies to give satisfactory guarantees as to protection, working conditions, and wages for the evacuees to be sent to their area.

The sweeping evacuation of 70,000 citizens and 40,000 law-abiding alien Japanese was ordered on the grounds of military necessity, during the national emergency. It ill becomes any of those who excused that order to protest when the same national emergency dictates the settling of a few evacuees in their vicinity.