

Jap Families In Puyallup Valley Balk at Tilling

TACOMA, March 3.—(AP)—The black-soiled valle yof the Puyallup River, where Japanese families worked on their hands and knees from dawn to twilight last year to produce 1,000 carloads of vegetables and berries, went into the doldrums today when the Army announced its evacuation plans.

The fertile Puyallup Valley, reaching from Tacoma Harbor to the foothills of Mount Rainier, long has been devoted to the truck farms of countless Japanese families. The schools in the valley communities have a majority of dark-skinned pupils, and the prosperous canneries are Japanese-operated.

Spring Planting Waits

But the green winter sod of the valley is not being broken up for spring planting.

"It is hard work. Why should we do it if it is not to be of any use?" asked one head of a family. "We can't get white men to work in vegetables."

Cannery owners envisioned closed plants and fallow farms.

"Even if we paid the white workers as high as 50 cents an hour, they would not come out of the defense plants in Tacoma to work the vegetables and berry gardens. And the public could not afford our products if we should have to pay 50 cents an hour."

Most of the Japanese in the valley are American-born. Their children go to the public schools in the valley communities of Fife, Sumner and Puyallup, where they sometimes outshine their occidental schoolmates in studies.

Children Help in Fields

After school and at all hours during spring and summer vacations the children work close to the ground with their elders, weeding by hand the damp, black, river-bottom soil. And when families reach a size of from six to eight to ten children, there is no labor problem.

The Japanese growers admit there has been a change since Pearl Harbor.

"After that Sunday (December 7) the white children in the school began to taunt our children. Some of the valley white men have been at Pearl Harbor. There is a feeling growing up between the two races."

Labor Surveys Started

Some of the white people in the valley towns are making surveys of available labor, including school children.

"The Japanese have got to go first," one woman told a reporter. "I won't have my boys working in the fields with the Japs."

A local air-raid warden turned to her and replied:

"Your boy will work out there in the field, Japs or no Japs, or else you'll both be working for the Mikado later on."