



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D.C.

December 30, 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Re: War Relocation Authority Supervision of
Persons of Japanese Ancestry Evacuated
from Western Military Areas.

In response to your request for my views on the current problems involved in the relocation of citizens and aliens of Japanese ancestry evacuated from the West Coast, I advise you of the following principal considerations:

1. Detention.- Executive Order 9102 of March 18, 1942 created the War Relocation Authority in the Office of Emergency Management to shelter and feed and to find employment for and relocate the 110,000 Japanese, two-thirds of them American citizens, evacuated by the War Department from the West Coast. These people have been detained in ten relocation camps throughout the West and Middle West pending their relocation in normal American life throughout the country. Under Director Dillon Myer, War Relocation Authority has already relocated 22,000 of these persons throughout the United States. This job has been done well and at a rapid rate in view of the natural resistance of most communities to persons of the Japanese race at this time.

2. Press Agitation.- The Japanese race problem is seriously aggravated by influential groups of citizens of California and the Hearst press apparently for the major purpose of discrediting the Japanese minority so completely that they will be set apart permanently from the rest of the population and encouraged or forced to go to Japan after the war and discouraged or prevented from returning to California. A successful relocation program is not wanted by these groups

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because it promotes acceptance of the Japanese and will leave them free to return to California after the war. The December 20 issue of "Time" magazine contains an article which well summarizes these efforts to increase and exploit bitter feeling against the Japanese minority.

3. Segregation. - Over 15,000 of the 90,000 Japanese remaining in relocation centers, consisting of individuals or families of individuals thought likely to be disloyal, have been segregated in a special camp at Tule Lake, California, in the northeast corner of the state a few miles below the Oregon border. A disturbance in the camp between November 1 and November 4, 1943, which was grossly exaggerated in a part of the West Coast press, touched off a new and extreme wave of hysteria against all persons of Japanese ancestry. WRA was so severely criticized for alleged coddling of the Japanese-Americans that West Coast community confidence in Myer and in WRA generally was undermined. The fact that 100,000 Japanese had been held in concentration camps for over a year and a half and that only two incidents of enough importance to require the calling in of the troops occurred is generally overlooked, and the West Coast press and Congressional delegation seem unanimous in demanding a different administration at least of the Tule Lake camp.

4. Permanent Resettlement. - The most important long run problem is not the management of the Tule Lake Camp, since many of those Japanese have indicated allegiance to Japan and many probably will be repatriated after the war. The important thing is to secure the reabsorption of about 95,000 Japanese, of whom two-thirds are citizens and who give every indication of being loyal to the United States, into normal American life. The present practice of keeping loyal American citizens in concentration camps on the basis of race for longer than is absolutely necessary is dangerous and repugnant to the principles of our Government. It is

also necessary to act now so that the agitation against these citizens does not continue after the war.

5. Political Aspects of the Problem. - The amount of interest in the Japanese problem on the West Coast makes it a general political problem. A poll recently conducted by a Los Angeles paper indicated that Californians would vote ten to one against permitting the United States citizens of Japanese ancestry ever to return. Congressmen and others are tempted to make political capital by urging a harsh regulation of the Japanese in response to the public clamor which has been fostered. It is necessary to conduct the administration of the program so that the least possible ground for public sensation and such political action is available.

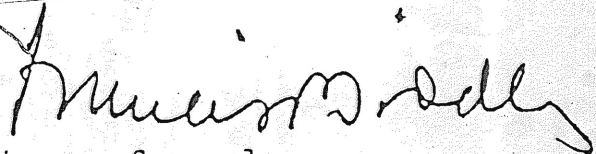
6. Administration of the Resettlement Program. - WRA, a new agency created for the purpose in the evacuation emergency, has been dealing with a job which the war against Japan makes most difficult and thankless. Some of its difficulties with the press and with some elements of Congress might be lessened if, instead of being required to meet these pressures as a small new independent agency, WRA were part of a permanent department of the Government under the supervision of a member of the Cabinet and could rely on the relations of such a department with the public and Congress. Transfer to such a department would give it the benefit of long established administrative procedures and might improve administration. The War Department has stated strongly, and the State Department has agreed, that it should not receive the job because Army supervision might lead to additional hardship for American citizens under control of the Japanese government. Moreover, the War Department should not be burdened with the job of resettlement of part of the civilian population. If WRA were to be transferred to any department it would

probably be either the Interior Department which has the experience of the Indian Service and in general has the type of jurisdiction and personnel to do the job, or the Justice Department which through the Immigration and Naturalization Service has the experience of the detention and care of alien enemies and aliens generally. From the long-term view, however, it would fit better in Interior.

7. Separation of Resettlement and Segregation. - It has been suggested that the segregated Japanese should not be handled by the same agency which handles resettlement of the loyal Japanese because of the public tendency to attribute any difficulties with the disloyal to all of the Japanese. For that reason it might be wise to place the Tule Lake segregation camp and its security problems in the Department of Justice which has primary responsibility for internal security. The remainder of the WRA could then be transferred to the Interior Department or kept as a separate agency. Such an arrangement however might involve serious administrative difficulties in operation.

8. Public Relations. - If any administrative change be made it is important that it be accompanied by a careful public statement endorsing the principle of resettlement and the excellent way in which it has been carried out by WRA. Care should be taken to make it clear that any change of administration is not a reflection upon the WRA relocation policy or administration because fairness to WRA requires this and if WRA were discredited the principle of resettlement might be discredited in the public mind and some support might be given to the erroneous idea that the great majority of Japanese-American citizens are not loyal and do not have the usual constitutional rights.

Respectfully,


Attorney General