

36-10-D
Hunt, Idaho
December 5, 1944

Mr. Harry L. Stafford
Project Director
Hunt, Idaho

Dear Sir:

During the last two and a half years of life in this center, it has always been my lot to work for the best interests of the people, and I have been happy to have had such opportunities to do my small share of serving others. I have seen the birth and growth of our Minidoka Consumers' Co-operatives, having served as Chairman of the Board of Directors, and I have shared the responsibilities of the Community Council by serving in the capacity of Chairman. However, I have come to realize lately, that my duties here in this project have almost come to a close, and I feel that there is a bigger job of serving the people by helping them to relocate. It is with this thought in mind that I am writing to you.

The question, where should the Japanese evacuees go is, no doubt, the problem that concerns every evacuee resident who now remain in this center. The question has been thoroughly discussed, and attempts have been made too, but not having reached any satisfactory solution for the majority, the older Issei groups with large number of children still remain in this center without any immediate prospects of relocation.

Ever since the evacuation, people have experienced many changes, among them the mental aspect being most prevalent. I remember those people who were once strongly objecting to relocation and who were determined to stay till the last, have gone out and turned for new jobs. This trend of residents' thinking is becoming more and more noticeable as days go by.

However, to date, the number of people who have left the center is not exceeding one-third of the total population originally brought in here. It is also a fact too, that among the relocatees, there are very few aged people with large number of dependants. In other words, the majority

of these relocatees constitute the younger group, physically abled and aggressive job seekers with very few dependants. As a result of this movement, the reflection upon the remaining population indicate that there are two large age groups, one ranging from 55 to 65 years, and the other from 1 to 17 years old. This explains that the elderly Isseis having a large family have been very reluctant about relocating for obvious reasons.

It may be of interest to point out too, that these elderly group were the leaders of the Japanese community in Seattle and Portland prior to evacuation, and they were fairly comfortably established. They have had long and varied experiences in their particular line of business, and had built up successful business. I believe that these people, even now, should possess some savings which can be invested into business whenever the opportunity should arrive.

The residents are now discussing about the back-to-coast problem. If and when that day should come, what percentage of the residents will return, and will they be welcomed and given business opportunities? My belief is that the answer will not be a very encouraging one to us. I feel too, that when the coast is reopened to us, the American public will not be so generous as to keep us in the centers forever. Consequently, I feel that the time will come when we all will have to leave the centers in great confusion, and to seek any kind of a job that we can find. There is not a doubt in my mind that this would result in a most unfortunate condition, once again repeating the disappointments and despairs experienced previously by the evacuees as victims of circumstances in this war. In view of this probable chaos, I am more and more convinced that to take definite steps toward relocation now is of utmost importance.

However, with many of us, relocation is a very serious problem, for there are many factors to be considered before taking final action. It seems that the job opportunities are plentiful throughout the country with varied wages, usually low in average. There are well paid positions too, but calls for a highly skilled labor which the majority of the evacuees are not qualified. Some of the evacuees have never worked in the capacity of an employee, for they have been independent shop owners. There is always a housing problem, and the relocatees are under constant fear of what will happen when the war is over, would the job be permanent, what would happen when he becomes ill and the income ceases. Though we all fully realize that real happiness can be found only after returning to a normal community life, the residents are hesitant about relocation when they come to consider these obstacles.

To help out with the relocation problem, the WRA has been supplying us with generous amount of pamphlets and descriptive literatures that are placed in our Dining Halls, every place of meeting, block clerk's offices, libraries, etc. The government must have spent tremendous amount of money to accomplish this end. However, it appears to me that these literatures are of little value to the residents considering what little interest they take in them. The informations do not prove attractive enough to those people whose prime object is a serious one, that of reestablishing themselves, and fight for their existence in a totally new locality.

The kind of informations that we are truly interested in are the facts from actual findings such as: Where is an ideal barbor-shop? where can we find out about the right size dye-works shop? what hotels and restaurants can we buy, its size and its trade line? where is the grocery store for sale? etc. There are the problems of initial cash investment necessary, and what is the proportional income derived from such an investment? What is the general feeling and acceptance of the Japanese people in that community, and the school situation for the children?

The residents in this center are generally from Seattle and Portland localities, and prior to their evacuation, the statistics show that in Seattle alone, there were as many as 230 hotels, 180 groceries, 50 or more dye-works, same number of barbor shops, large number of different class restaurants, drug stores, food manufacturers, garages, dry good stores, florists, etc. They were enjoying a good business, and in my opinion, they still have the ambition and courage enough to reestablish similar trades if they see good opportunities.

In view of these facts, I feel that a more comprehensive informations based upon actual survey of different businesses made by some Japanese agent who fully knows the abilities and the business traits of the Japanese people will prove most helpful to the evacuees.

Prompted by a desire to help those loyal residents who wish to relocate, and with a purpose of supplying the evacuees with correct informations based upon actual contacts and investigations of prospective business opportunities, I would like to ask you to submit to the proper authorities my request to serve as a field agent for the WRA in the eastern area, mainly Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and New York.

Respectfully yours,