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THE EVACUEE SPEAKS
PRIVATE NEWSLETTER

August 20, 1942

File
"Santa Anita"
"Prize Newsletter"

THIRTY-FOUR YOUTHS ORDERED TO LEAVE CENTER

This morning, August 17th, eleven boys out of 34 slated to leave left camp at 3:30 A.M. for the Tule Lake Relocation Center. Why they had to go was not explained by anything more than the phrase, "for the good of the center." Not any of these people had an inkling of the order until yesterday afternoon between 2:15 and 3:30 P.M. Some are accustomed to coming home late at night, and these, of course, did not learn of it until then. A committee of five, including the youth leaders, were with the Center Manager, Wilbur, until 1:30 A.M. this morning, trying to explain the case for these boys as well as attempting to secure a reason for the order. Mr. Wilbur, after listening to them, phoned to five different agencies in San Francisco to determine whether he could have the order rescinded. The final reply from the responsible army officer was no.

The action will aggravate the already delicate camp situation. The youths--three of whom are under twenty and a fourth just twenty-one--are being separated from their parents and relatives without explanation. However, the administrators have assured them that the families will positively be rejoined. Personal investigation of four of the boys revealed no valid reason for their removal for the "good of the center." As a matter of important fact, one is a needed club advisor and the others were leading club members. If anything, they are needed here for the "good of the center." More boys have been given notice to prepare themselves for leaving this evening.

Why does the Army refuse to give reasons for their removal? What effect will this have upon Center morale, upon the relatives, upon the youth group? What will this do to the organized Boys' Club activities which have just begun to make significant progress, even among the less manageable youth? And most important--what will this do to the thinking of the boy, that is, will it make the task of understanding and belief in Democracy impossible?

CENTER RESIDENTS MOB POLICEMEN

On Sunday, August 9, the daily newspapers carried the first account of the riot which took place five days earlier. The news release was incomplete in one important respect: it failed to mention the immediately provoking cause, the police contraband search. During that day, some of the center residents attacked a member of the Internal Security Police and threatened others. In order to understand this amazing burst of defiance, certain previous administrative measures should be noted.

At the end of May, camp managers severely regulated all center meetings, banning those which would discuss political topics of an international, national, state, or local nature. Soon afterwards, July 7, they curtailed the reading and possession of Japanese language literature, excepting the English-Japanese dictionaries, Hymn books and Bibles. Then, on July 28, a ban was placed on all Japanese records, voice and instrumental; they later modified this to include only those of a "subversive nature." *These orders had the effect of creating a cumulative resentment among the inhabitants, many of whom surmised that the administrators were deliberately planning to make their lives as miserable as possible.

*This modification has not yet been publicly announced.

So, if the steps were intended to curb things un-American, the purpose was defeated in the alienation of many people.

Early Tuesday morning, August 4, there was nothing to indicate that anything unusual would occur. About 10:15, however, people observed policemen going into the house units and coming out with hot plates, dishes, records, books, screwdrivers, hammers, sacks of rice, etc. A house to house search for contraband was being conducted. Tales of money and jewelry being taken, houses broken into by policemen immediately became rife, and knots of people formed in front of barracks to prevent further searching. People stormed the administrative offices with complaints of police robbery and mistreatment. In the Recreational Hall, all workers were released to go home and "protect their belongings." Feeling grew high; this "last straw" sentiment burst the emotional cyst. At 3 in the afternoon a crowd picked out a policeman accused of having money and jewelry concealed in his hat and chased him into the Orange Mess Hall. He was rescued a short while later by other members of the police force on a pick-up truck. The crowd, now highly excited, sought out a long-suspected "informer," Kawaguchi. Cornered in the government house, he failed to satisfy their inquiries about his activities. They beat him severely. At approximately the same time a crowd of some two hundred people assembled in front of the police office in the grandstand, demanding the return of their belongings. The soldiers (Military Police) appeared at 5:15 P.M. to quell the crowd, and they remained until Friday afternoon, August 7. On Wednesday, August 5, the MP's systematically checked the complaints; they were courteous and were well-received by the inhabitants.

There was little doubt in the minds of the thinking population that an incident such as this was coming for some time. Suppressed by one means or another, the people had to find an outlet for their long pent-up feelings.

Some other noteworthy aspects of the riot incident: the uncovering of a liquor smuggling plot, involving Caucasian mess hall stewards and cooks; definite evidence of homes broken into without either the knowledge or consent of the owner; the deplorable educational effect upon the children; loss of confidence in the Internal Security Police; and hope for improved treatment by the inhabitants with the change of certain administrators, thus creating a more receptive Center mentality.

REACTION OF THE ISSEI TO THE AUGUST 4TH INCIDENT

The reaction of the issei residents to the unfortunate events of August 4th is very interesting. First, they did not take active part in violence, remaining, in most cases, as interested spectators. Second, it was they, more than the nisei, who felt relieved. They had been complaining that their offspring were spineless. Now, they had seen with their own eyes that the nisei can be aroused, when there is just cause to become aroused. Several issei expressed their feelings thus: "I misjudged the nisei. They're all right. I'm glad." Regarding their unusual calmness, several careful observers expressed this view: had the search occurred after the U.S. offensive near the Solomon Islands, the issei could not have remained calm; on August 4th, the news of the offensive was still unpublished; the issei could be composed because they were confident that Japan was winning. Serious thought must be given to this very interesting observation, for it is quite possible that the issei will be more likely to cause trouble when they are worried and desperate about the war situation.

DEMOCRATIC-ENLIGHTENMENT CLASSES CONTINUE

The adult classes in democratic enlightenment stood their first serious test during the days when the Assembly Center was placed under military control. Despite flying rumors that all activities were suspended and that there would be no school session, more than 170 listeners attended the class on Wednesday morning, August 6th, the morning after the mobbing of the policemen. Although the attendance was only half of the average daily attendance for the previous week, there were enough present to continue lectures. When the class was organized ten weeks ago, morale building was its primary object, together with an attempt to serve as a stabilizing factor in the Center. Its undisturbed continuation during those turbulent days gave confidence and stability to the greatly shaken people of the Center. The calisthenics group, which had voluntarily discontinued its meeting Wednesday morning, resumed the next day, when one of the participants, a student of the democratic enlightenment class, told the leader that the class had gone on as usual and that keeping the Center life as normal as possible would help greatly in keeping up morale among the residents.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

In the grandstand every morning and afternoon, English language classes are held. The course intends to teach the Issei and Kibei self-expression in and understanding of English. Since the instruction period is short, conversation is stressed, and only enough grammar to promote the understanding of oral speech is taught. The pupil is classified into one of twenty-five groups, according to the degree he comprehends English. There are classes where the uneducated beginner is schooled in the rudimentary ABC's, then they range upward through the intermediate, which works upon sentence structure and composition, up to the senior group. The latter reads and discusses books and news articles. Everyone makes amazing progress to the delight of both the teachers and pupils. Attendance is regular in spite of the walking distance to class and the necessity of climbing the grandstand stairs. The instructors, with limited teaching materials, secure what they can in the Santa Anita library and work out the lessons together at meetings. There is a shortage of blackboards and chalk. There are other difficulties: noise and hubbub from the camouflage workers who work below; children, and other English classes; and the dust from the camouflage nets.

THE ROLE OF 'THE PACIFIC CITIZEN'

We are at war--and because of our affinity with the enemy in the past, we have been affected by a military measure for the security of the country. The task of leadership for the nisei is that of offering a constructive program and guiding the nisei through the test that the evacuation and resettlement program presents. The Pacific Citizen, the newspaper of the Japanese American Citizens' League and the only national newspaper publication for the nisei, has, unfortunately, failed to give such leadership thus far. Instead, it has become a "loud-speaker" that cries, "We've been done wrong. Where is Democracy?" Instead of giving the nisei a positive view and giving the understanding that a measure restricting Japanese in America is inevitable in view of the complicated relationship of the nisei--it fell to questioning the evacuation. It forgot that we are in a war and wrote in such a way that the attention of the nisei was diverted from the war, its problems, and its relation to the nisei--to abstract questioning. Instead of uplifting the morale of the nisei and creating a positive attitude, it broke morale by its negative policy. The Pacific Citizen must of necessity grasp the reality of the position of the Japanese-Americans in the war, see that the situation of

4

the nisei arose from the war, and give positive leadership to the nisei.

TEST CASES FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

The handling of the test cases for the civil liberties of the Japanese evacuees reveals a weakness on the part of the organization which has taken them up and which unless checked, may prove to be a boomerang to the Japanese. It is unfortunate that the organization has not been more realistic about the very thing that brought about the evacuation: the war with Japan. A section of the Japanese population had been involved in partisanship to Japan's war. One of the test case subjects had been connected with such activities. The enemy within the Japanese is trying to utilize every opportunity found in the democratic system to further his activities; and unless careful checks are not made as to his previous activities and his true character revealed, not only will the organization be disgraced for aiding the enemy, but the Japanese-Americans will be placed in a position that will invite attack from groups that have already made a number of attempts to injure the Japanese.

COOPS IN THE RELOCATION AREAS

Many interesting opinions have been expressed by Center residents regarding the cooperative organization in the Relocation Areas. Summarized, their opinion seems to be: It is all right to have coops, but to ban all private enterprise is bad. There should at least be permitted a limited number of private enterprises--barbershops, shoe-repairing, and the like should be done by individuals who use their own skills and tools. There would be better service, and individuals in these professions would feel more free than if they were working under the administration. It is added that in case there are various types of cooperatives, including consumer cooperatives, those with idle capital should be permitted to invest with limited dividend assured. Making more flexible the present strict regulations would have three advantages: (1) Idle capital can be used for the benefit of the residents, (2) those with capital and experience are given incentive for harder work, (3) all the residents are given hope that at the time they must leave the area after the war there will be opportunity for free enterprise on their own money. Their greatest worry at present seems to be that there are no prospects of making money for the duration of the war, and both the issei and the nisei are horrified at the thought of getting out of the Areas penniless, when the war ends. Permitted limited private enterprise and private investment may greatly relieve such worries.

GOVERNMENT ISSUE OF CLOTHING

Beginning Friday, August 14, notice of clothing issuance to the Center residents were distributed. According to this, each person, adult or child, is given a certain allotment ranging from \$2.25 to \$4.61 per month, retroactive from the day of induction to August 31. Thus, a male adult arriving on May 1st will be given \$15.24, which is the amount he can order from the approved list of clothing from the Sears and Roebuck Company. Those who have already been issued shoes will have the cost of the shoes deducted from their clothing allowance--\$3.00 for the men and \$1.75 for women.

NEW MESS CARD SYSTEM OF FEEDING

A month ago, a card system of feeding was started in the mess halls. The numbered card indicates the hour at which the resident is to have his meals, and no one is allowed to enter the mess hall except at the time indicated. The system has eliminated long queues of people who used to wait as long as half an hour. It appears that the new method has cut down on waste considerably and may be the cause of a noticeable improvement in food. The residents are now enjoying butter, rice, and other vegetables served "family style" on the table

and only the main dish is served cafeteria style.

WRITERS' PROJECT

About twenty-five qualified writers and research workers are now engaged in compiling a documentary history of Santa Anita under the supervision of Louis Suski, former English section editor of a Los Angeles Japanese newspaper. Most of the writers are college graduates with experience in sociological and historical research, chosen from a large number of applicants. Dr. Yamato Ichihashi, a former Stanford professor who has recently left for the Tule Lake Relocation Center, served in an advisory capacity in organizing and assigning various phases of the project. Although the project has been in formal existence for a month, the problems of the selection of personnel, obtaining work orders, and administrative sanction of the program of research, submitted in outline form, have delayed progress. Every phase of the development of the community, from the first day of induction to the last day of relocation to a 'for-the-duration' area will be studied in detail. It may prove to be of great value in understanding the problems confronted in the organization and smooth-functioning of an evacuee community.

WAR POSTER CONTEST

"Drawn by Japs--to Fight Japs" was the caption under a picture in a Los Angeles newspaper of the posters submitted to the War Poster Contest of the Art Directors' Club of Los Angeles by seven nisei artists at the Santa Anita Assembly Center. After much controversy, in which hundreds of persons telephoned the club, expressing their views, the organization decided that "Art, like music, is universal and should not be considered from a racial standpoint." One of the committeemen who objected to considering the posters made by nisei presented, perhaps, the opinion of a large number of the American public: "We are at war. Maybe these Japanese youngsters do feel loyal to the United States. The fact still remains they are Japanese and unfortunately become a party to Japanese atrocities now being committed. I definitely do not feel that they should be considered as winners of any of the prizes or honorable mentions." On the other hand, the nisei had an understanding spokesman on the committee who said, "Of course they should be allowed to enter. They didn't consent to be born Japanese. Most of them are not in favor of the present Japanese government or its actions. From a standpoint of fairness, their work should be judged on ability, not on the attitude we think the general public may take."

No word has been received from the committee as to whether any of the posters submitted won any of the war-bond prizes, but the artists are pleased that their posters have been of some worth in presenting to the American public their desire to participate in the war-effort.

GIRLS' CLUBS UNDERTAKE SOCIAL WELFARE WORK

The older girls' clubs are busily engaged in making layettes for the needy babies in the Center from materials which were donated by various individuals and organizations. Many of the mothers are without funds to buy even the most necessary diapers. However, with the clothing issue, which has begun this week in the form of orders to the Sears and Roebuck Company, some of this shortage may be alleviated. Because the amount allotted for infants is \$2.25 a month, there will undoubtedly be further needs.