

## A NISEI SPEAKS

Robert M. Hosokawa, Nisei Whitman 1940

Minidoka is a community born of war, a city of drab tarpaper barracks with a population of 8,867. It borders an old irrigation canal on a rocky portion of sage-covered Idaho desert.

It is not a prosperous community but has schools, a hospital, some stores, a weekly paper, churches, and a cemetery. Minidoka's inhabitants are of all temperaments and trades. They are civic minded, aloof, selfish, dishonest, generous, and progressive. There are office clerks, doctors, coal shovelers, policemen, loafers, preachers, students, and housewives.

As in all America, the windows of Minidoka hold service stars. Some have two and three, even four, each representing an American soldier.

For all of this apparent normalcy, Minidoka is a lonely place, spiritually bleak, devoid of hope and warmth. It is surrounded by barbed wire, and watch towers punctuate the horizon. The only gate is guarded by military policy. No one enters or leaves without credentials.

Yet this is an American community. More than two-thirds of its inhabitants are citizens. The remainder are aliens who have lived long in the United States but are ineligible for naturalization because of congressional legislation.

Minidoka is mono-racial and its inhabitants who look through the fencing are of Japanese descent. They were moved to Minidoka and to ten inland centers in the summer of 1942 when mass evacuation from the Pacific coast was deemed a military necessity.

There is nothing lavish at Minidoka. Many inadequacies exist. However, most of its residents do not complain. They realize their discomforts are not serious. My wife and I often discussed how trifling our troubles were in comparison with those being endured by thousands of America's fighting men.

Subnormal conditions make home life and training of the young a difficult job. There is no privacy, for each family has only one room. There are central mess halls where residents stand in line thrice daily.

Recreational facilities are few, but the Nisei and the Caucasian staff members have made attempts at constructive activities. The depressing limitations of concentration are killing initiative and responsibility.

Younger children cannot recall their former homes. And to them the crowded existence as government wards is normal. They eat in mess halls, often apart from their parents, and training in such little things as table manners is lacking. Their social contacts are wholly with other evacuees. It will take much readjustment when they are free to return to normal living.

Schools in the center are handicapped by lack of equipment. Textbooks are few and individual research is difficult. Zoology students finish courses without having dissected the earthworm or the frog. Incentive for study is often dulled in even the brightest students.

Classes are held in made-over barrack rooms with children sitting on benches. The physical handicaps are not as important as the effect they have on these young students. Most of them know only that they are being confined, "because we had the wrong ancestors," as one evacuee put it. They are conscious of the  
(forward)



stigma and do not know what they can do about it. They wonder if America wants them when they read reports of "mass deportation," or at least permanent exclusion from the coast.

Some students are finding their way to schools in the Middle West and East, through efforts of the National Student Relocation Council and its supporting groups.

There are more than 5,000 Nisei now training in U.S. Army camps. Some are already fighting in Italy and in the Pacific. Those not yet in the service are hoping for early reinstatement to selective service so that they may execute their responsibilities as Americans.

In cooperation with military intelligence and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the War Relocation Authority has set up machinery permitting those residents who can pass stringent investigation, to leave the project. To date about 2,300 have secured their indefinite leaves and have passed through the date for cities, towns, farms, and schools outside the Western Defense Command. The W.R.A. was created by the government to carry out this resettlement and is doing a commendable job under trying conditions. It is the target of West Coast politicians and racists who would discredit its essentially American viewpoint and tactics.

Most of those who leave the center are Nisei -- American born, American schooled. Few return to Minidoka. The W.R.A., with offices in a dozen mid-western and eastern cities, is finding community acceptance the least of its worries. It is avoiding concentration in any area. Stories of successful relocation and assimilation are many, but the present egress is still a trickle.

Nisei are being employed in war factories and farms, in homes and offices. They are contributing to the victory effort in practically every state. They have relocated most heavily in the Middle West and least of all in the South.

Greatest blessing to loyal Americans of Japanese descent was the segregation recently completed in which 15,000 found disloyal or unworthy of Americanism were weeded out and transferred to the Tule Lake project in California.

The other 85,000, stand a better chance of having their faith in America recognized. They did not lose faith even though they had been sent from their homes and placed in camps. They want to be wholly American, to have a part in the American dream.

My wife and I were released from Minidoka last March when a news job was located in the Middle West. We passed federal scrutiny and made the transition without difficulty. We have been happy and thankful for our freedom and we treasure it deeply.

Now that we have been here a year, we are hoping to move farther North or East, to greener and more permanent pastures, perhaps to New England, where we can try our roots in the soil which nurtured the first Americans. We believe in America and want it to believe fully in us.



THE AMERICAN BAPTIST HOME MISSION SOCIETY

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New York 10, N.Y.

*Minidoka  
document*

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Dear Friends:

This is a report on a visit to the Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho, October 13 - 23, 1945, and should be read in conjunction with the report dated October 19, of my visit to the Granada Relocation Center, Amache, Colorado, October 8 - 12, 1945.

The contrast is interesting, to say the least. The closing procedures in Granada seemed bad enough when I was there. There had been pressures brought to bear on the bachelors to get them out of the Center some weeks previous and prior to my arrival. There had been one case of a forced removal and eviction of an elderly man, but the repercussions from the remaining residents were soon recognized by the administration and apparently the pressures had been abandoned. But when I arrived in Minidoka I was totally unprepared to find procedures operating that can only be described as "gestapo" methods. Severe pressures were being used. There was not only one but many removals and evictions. Repercussions had been quickly evident. Resentments, bitterness and further resistance to relocation were manifest. This, to the Minidoka administrators, called for further stringent methods and pressures. Part of the pressures was the decision to shut off and lock up sanitary facilities (one building to each block housing, laundry, bath and toilet facilities) in what was termed "orderly" fashion. It was orderly, certainly, in terms of pressure--the first blocks to suffer closing of facilities were those that had the greatest numbers of residents and the more articulate and, therefore, to the administration, the "agitators." In the last week, although remaining families were still scattered throughout 34 of the 35 blocks in the Center, less than ten of these "laundry" buildings were open. By then this could no longer be termed logically as a pressure. That Minidoka was already a totally undesirable place in which to remain was more than evident.

The number of messhalls in operation had been reduced to five. True enough, cooks and workers were no longer available to keep all of the messhalls going. But in addition, toward the end, the administration failed to transport food from warehouse to messhalls, giving the excuse that help was lacking. Residents already busy with their own preparations to leave had to volunteer to go to the warehouse to haul food-stuffs-- by then reduced to flour, rice and eggs for the most part--so that they and others could eat. However, personnel seemed always available when recalcitrant families were to be picked up and evicted. (In Topaz, I was told, essential services were maintained by key evacuees that were asked to stay to the end -- at "outside" wages, I presume)

In 1943 I had lived in the Minidoka Center for about six months, from January to the end of June. I had just come from Tulalake Relocation Center on a "transfer." Tulalake had already gone through a few of the earlier of the many demonstrations that have made that Center notorious. I had found Minidoka quite tame in comparison and the residents docile and "spineless" as another "Tulean" put it. Any friction that might have existed at that time in Minidoka between the A. P. (Administration Personnel) and the residents had not as yet come to the surface. The process of "induction" that my family and I went through was far from efficient. Although 27 persons were included in the bus-load from Tulalake to Minidoka, it seemed to us that the whole process of meeting us at the bus station, lack of consideration for old persons, mothers and their small children, and the bungling way in which the reception and induction was done was without much order or efficiency. No A.P. met us either at the station or in the housing office and the cold weather was matched by the almost frigid reception. Later, some of this was corrected and there was an attempt at consideration of human needs. This time the lack of efficiency had been corrected--that is efficiency in terms of getting people out--but the warmth was no longer present. It is true that a number of individual members of the A.P. possess and radiate warmth and were trying under extreme pressure to be human. Their efforts, however, were futile when every calculated move in the program for final dissolution of the Center demanded that every division and section in the administrative set-up



be geared to mesh with the beautifully programmed schedules of departures. The Welfare Section was particularly embarrassed by the fact that it could not apply good social techniques nor be lenient in special hardship cases because of limitations imposed by a "streamlined, economy-minded" regime.

The day that I arrived in Minidoka I was told that as of midnight Friday, October 12, the resident population was 851. The peak population had been about 9400 at one time, but actually some 12,800 have lived there at one time or another. (During the life of the Center quite a number of transfers from other centers had come in, filling up the vacancies left by those that had relocated earlier. The largest number of the transfers had come from Tululake at the time of the segregation program.) All of this residual 851 were scheduled to leave the Center by the 23rd of October, 8 days ahead of the final date that had been set from the Washington office. During my stay the movement proceeded about as scheduled. The administrative heads were anticipating that this stepped-up movement would establish some kind of record for other centers to shoot at. In contrast to this desire to establish a record is the concern that had apparently been shown at the Granada Center. Although Granada was supposed to close on October 15 and was all ready to do so when I left there on the 12th, I found out later that the 85 remaining for the last day did not leave until the 17th because temporary housing for them had not been confirmed from Sacramento, to where they were going. I recall that the relocation office in Granada was desperately trying to get that confirmation while I was there.

Soon after Administrative Order 289 was issued from Washington setting forth drastic procedures for the movement of recalcitrant residents, the Minidoka administration worked out a mathematically calculated schedule of departures that would close the Center ahead of schedule. The final closing date was later announced as October 21 and finally set for the 23rd. All the policies and procedures were geared to fit into this schedule. The only concessions made in the interests of human needs were to advise the Welfare Section to begin immediately to process the welfare cases and to cooperate with the medical officer in arranging for the final transfer of hospital cases. Every advantage was taken of the drastic nature of Administrative Order 289. It was as though the Center administrators rubbed their hands in glee as they read the order and said, "This is what we've been looking for for a long time. Now we can really go to work and apply the screws."

It seems evident that in the early days of the Minidoka Center the project director had difficulty in deciding whether to deal with the residents with a "gloved hand" or an "iron fist." He had evidently decided to go along with the milder policies as issued from the Washington office but made a mental reservation of the "iron fist" policy, which he seemed to favor as recent events indicate. (Although the project director resigned to go with UNRRA recently, the closing period policies set by him were being rigidly followed.) In all fairness it must be said that the project director was a benevolent dictator, but unfortunately he had around him an administrative staff that in the main favored the theory that the best way to govern the "Nips" and "Japs", as some of the staff called the residents, was to issue orders, "be tough with them," and stern measures were the only measures that would be understood. There were a minimum of conferences with the representatives of the people and even after the Community Council of the Minidoka residents was formed there was only one clear-cut issue in which the Council was a dominant factor. Most of the time the members of the Council were no more than "messenger boys" of the administration. One wonders why the Minidokans "took it lying down" whereas residents of the other centers protested, in many cases violently. (The Tuleans thought that the Minidokans were "spineless.") The reasons are numerous but a statement of just a few will suffice.

In the first place, most of the residents of Minidoka were from urban areas and inclined to be more independent and individualistic in their outlook. Also, being from the Northwest in the main, where discrimination was less evident, there was not the strong resentment against Caucasians that evacuees from certain areas of California hold. Then, too, there is the fact that immediately after the establishment of the Center many of the residents took advantage of "short term leave" to go out for seasonal work to harvest sugar beets, potatoes and vegetables. Thus a large number of the men were out of the Center, and among them were very likely those that might have been leaders in mass protests and demonstrations. Those that remained were dominated by a group of older men who in the main were in positions of comparative importance and as such were in closer touch with the administration. This either



inflated their feeling of importance, leading to a desire to curry favors from their contacts on the "hill" or they were in a position to temper the more drastic "pronouncements" in the process of transmittal by translation.

That the "iron fist" policy was always lurking in the background and was the dominant philosophy of the "powers that be" comes out definitely at the time that Administrative Order 289 was issued. It comes out in such statements as "Now you can get back at the Nips for all the abuse that you have had to take from them," "Don't you want your 'pound of flesh' also?," and "I don't care what happens to them just so they are a long way from here." In all this it must not be forgotten that a large number of the personnel were essentially fair and that a few were outspoken in their efforts to ameliorate the program. The efforts of these few and the pleadings of the residents had little effect on the policies as they were finally carried out. It must also be said that there is evidence to show that the intention of the Administrative Order 289, although stern and drastic in content, was to bring psychological pressure on the "die-hards," and on those who found it hard to act on their own initiative. It was repeatedly pointed out by the National Director and others in the Washington WRA office that "289" was not to be used except in extreme cases. Unfortunately, however, when a harsh order is issued, no matter what the intent, the intent may be ignored completely. As the policy under "289" was developed in Minidoka, that is what happened.

In order to understand the reasons for the comparatively large numbers of individuals in Minidoka that preferred to wait until the "eviction" orders came, one must go back into the history of the Center. However, that would take a long time to tell. Suffice it to say that for some time prior to the issuance of "289" policies had already been in effect that were calculated to make Minidoka an undesirable place in which to remain. Increasingly these measures were having the opposite effect than the one desired. As every move was made the bitterness and the resentment came out in a form of defiance that was put something like this, "All right, the 'government' put us here, let the 'government' put us out." To the residents Government and WRA were synonymous. One would suppose that the administrators would have soon realized their mistake. They apparently refused to admit their mistakes or were unwilling to change their policies. Apparently the Japanese are not the only ones that fear "losing face." Then again the pressures had been in use for a long enough time that perhaps it was too late to make a change. It was by then a sort of vicious circle. Resistance to relocation was becoming more and more evident. This called for more pressures and actual evictions. Force was becoming necessary if the Center was to close on schedule.

It was interesting to note the many ways in which the residents were rationalizing their resistance to relocation. Defiance against the project's force-out program could not long be rationalized solely on the basis of resistance because of principles. Wasn't it being argued that principles or no principles the Center was going to close anyway and the sooner one left the better it would be for their individual benefit? To meet this sort of argument the "hardier" of the residents were soon saying that they could not go out as long as the "war is still on." This was long after V-J Day. They began to clutch at every rumor straw that floated by and soon they were believing even the wildest tales that evidently were being manufactured and disseminated by a former inmate of an institution. Everyone seemed to know that he was a "crackpot" yet his daily "broadcasts" were eagerly listened to and in the process of grapevine transmission was repeated as "authentic" information from Tokyo. In Granada the wildest rumors had been that Japan was then in the process of retaking Okinawa. In Minidoka the rumors were firmly believed that besides Okinawa all the rest of the major islands had been retaken and that troops had landed in San Francisco and that letters had been received that told of Japanese troops already in Salt Lake City. Therefore, it would not be long now so they must wait patiently in camp to be "liberated."

It is true that many were reluctant to leave because they feared the outside. In the camp there was a measure of security. On the outside they would have to find work that they felt might not be available to them. One does not allay such fears by "make up your minds or else we set your departure date" tactics. It is better accomplished by gentler persuasive methods. The Japanese are particularly amenable to "May I ask this as a favor" type of persuasion. If after the definite closing date was announced the administration had asked the people to understand their predicament and would they "please" cooperate, I am convinced the results would have been better and with little of the resentment and bitterness.



This, of course, presupposes a much earlier and long-range application of this decidedly humbler approach. It is not easy nor capable of admission by the average person.

What then was the program designed to close Minidoka ahead of schedule? The details of the beautifully conceived and beautifully executed program is a strategy worthy of a general, as if in war human values are only incidental. I will try to give in outline form what was done.

1. Bulletins to residents and news items and editorials in the Center newspaper, the "Irrigator."

Although much of the material in bulletins and in the news items, articles and editorials did stress opportunities on the "outside" and the advantages of leaving the Center early, the slant was that anyway the Center was going to close soon and so "you might as well leave now." The latter as it turned out was, to say the least, a negative approach. The one positive note was the "Townsend" letter in which George Townsend, as acting assistant project director of community management, not only told of the advantage of early relocation but also of the contribution that the Nisei could make to the life of the many communities in all parts of the country to which they could go.

2. Project-sponsored meetings.

These meetings were to be "educational" according to the project director. Let us see how educational they were.

a. The first of the series of meetings held in messhalls in late August was for all the residents and attendance was on an invitational basis. The main points about "289" and the procedures that would be used were presented. Then the "A", "B", "C" categories into which the residents were being divided were explained. Under "A" were included those that had made plans to relocate and had dates set to go out. The "B" group were those that had plans but had no dates set to leave. The "C" group included those that had no plans and no dates set. It was explained that the "B" people would be expected to set their departure dates soon. It was pointed out to the "C" people that they would be expected to and required to make plans and set their dates, otherwise departure dates would be set for them and after a three-day notice would be required to leave the Center.

b. The second series of meetings were conducted during the first week in September for the "B" people who had not yet set departure dates and for the "C" people. The necessity for making plans and setting dates of departure was reiterated. The three-day notice procedure was emphasized. In late August a bulletin was issued to advise the residents, the following words appear regarding this second series of meetings, "Internal Security will serve notices on all persons requested to attend those meetings." (Note that by this time most of the Internal Security personnel had been replaced by Caucasians. Then, too, no evacuee would risk his neck serving such notices. One can well imagine the reaction of the residents when served notices by, by that time, much hated "Hakujin" (White person) who were in addition the "police.")

c. In the third and last series of meetings starting about September 10th attendance was made compulsory and obligatory for the then remaining "B" and "C" people. Again quoting from the bulletin, "Compulsory attendance will be enforced by Internal Security which will canvass each neighborhood to see that persons so requested actually attend the meetings." A fourth step was included in the bulletin which "represents the last activity of the educational program." (Underscoring mine.) This fourth step was to be the issuing of the Three-Day Notices to those who still refused to be "educated." They were then to be shipped back to the places where they lived prior to evacuation.

3. The Two-Week Notices

In conjunction with the second and third series of meetings Two-Week Notices were sent to all of the "B" and "C" people. This was a warning that if plans and dates were not voluntarily made in the two-week period from the date of the notice a departure date would be set for them and a three-day advance notification given. There was a "joker" in this notice that reads, "However, the Project Director reserves the right to designate a departure date other than the one you select, if transportation facilities make such change



necessary." This reservation was used on October 9, when nine families in block 42 and one family in block 39, all of whose departure dates had been set for October 18 and which date had been approved by the relocation division, had their departure dates set up to the 12th and were so notified on the 9th. In this group was a family of three persons--father, mother and son (18 years). This young man became blind while in the Center. This family had no place to go, were financially unable to provide for the blind son, still under treatment, and had been requesting a discharge for another son in G-2 of the U. S. Army. If this family had been allowed to stay another week they would have been that much closer to the time that their soldier son could return and assist them. Interested A.P. were working at the time on contacts in Seattle for the family, but negotiations were not complete. Nevertheless, they were sent out on the 12th.

#### 4. The Three-Day Notices

There was very little discretion used in serving the Three Day Notices. The above-described situation is an example of indiscriminate scheduling. The wording of the three-day notice leaves no doubt that the "eviction" will be carried out. The last paragraph of the notice reads, "Internal Security is herewith directed to see that you complete leave procedure, clear housing records, secure ration books and arrange for property pickup in final preparation for your terminal departure on the above date." The notice is signed by the Acting Project Director and underneath is a line "by Project Attorney." Intentionally or otherwise the document reads and looks like a court order.

#### 5. Messhall closing

It was inevitable that in all of the centers many of the messhalls would be closed as the residents left, thus consolidating the operations to compensate for the lack of cooks and workers. In Minidoka there was also a breakdown, deliberate or otherwise, in the last weeks of the transportation of supplies from the warehouses to the messhalls. Most of the workers in the messhalls were already on a voluntary basis because there had been only feeble attempts on the part of the Steward's Department to recruit new help and no attempt to supply outside help. These voluntary workers soon found themselves in the predicament of not only cooking and serving meals, but also of having to go to the warehouses and commandeering trucks to transport the few items that were left. There was no bakery bread being purchased any longer because there was "too much flour in stock." Meat was almost an unknown item because some frozen fish and storaged eggs were still on hand. Some A.P. were saying that "Japs like rice" and since there was still an adequate supply "they can live on rice." Most of the residents were saying that they didn't want to see another egg for a long time. "Morning, noon and night, all we get are eggs" said several residents to me. I mentioned earlier that efficiency was only in terms of getting people out. It certainly did not operate to keep the residents well fed. Two days before the closing day two of the remaining five messhalls were scheduled to close and did close. But when residents from the area served by a messhall just closed went to another still open quite a number were turned away because no one had seen to it that extra supplies were there. This happened on a Sunday and of those turned away ten hungry residents walked to the administration area to protest and to seek food, but could find no responsible person that could help them. Fortunately, two or three sympathetic A.P.'s heard their plight and scurried around and raided personal cupboards and supplied bread and jams and canned meats to tide them over.

#### 6. Closing of sanitary facilities

Beginning October 1, when there were still close ot 1500 persons remaining, the first of the buildings housing the boiler-room, laundry, bath and toilet facilities(one to each block)was ordered closed. From then through the 18th, 26 of these buildings were locked up. This left eight or nine open in the entire Center of 35 blocks. By then most of the remaining residents were old men and women and families with large numbers of children. They had remained behind because they had found it harder to relocate. To have made life a little easier for them during the last days in camp by keeping the facilities open seems like the human thing to have done. But to the program-minded administrators that meant the residents would have been so contented they never would leave. It was asked why so many blocks



had facilities closed off. One feeble explanation was that since there were only two men available to close up the buildings the job had to be started early. It is inconceivable that WRA would not anticipate and provide sufficient time and money to hire persons to take care of such details after the official closing.

The day following my arrival I went to Shoshone from whence the residents were leaving on the trains. On that day there were some 80 persons leaving, mostly for Seattle and Portland and a few were headed East. There were no A.P. at the station and the people were left to shift for themselves, as far as the WRA was concerned. I had a job immediately, interpreting for a number of the old men and women lined up to get their tickets and later to get their baggage checked. That day and on subsequent days when I went to the station, particularly when there were large numbers leaving, I found that there were always matters arising that required the services of someone that could interpret for the people. There were also situations and problems cropping up that required that a WRA official be present. It was only after talking to the Welfare Section supervisor and pointing out to her the need for some WRA official capable of answering questions and able to decide matters that she finally decided to send someone to the station every day. She was actually overruling the decision of the acting project director not to send anyone. He had claimed that WRA officials could do very little and would only stand around and be useless.

There was an interesting case of a family that was waiting for the train to take them to Sacramento. This family had gotten Pullman accommodations from Ogden to Sacramento. However, the voucher with which he was to buy his tickets called for a routing from Shoshone to Wells, Nevada, at which point they were to board the Pullman leaving Ogden. This would have meant that he and his family would not be able to board the Pullman until early in the morning, but if they had been routed through Ogden they could board the Pullman there at midnight and they would have a good night's sleep. Why the project had made his tickets via Wells was a mystery because numbers of others going to Sacramento had been routed through Ogden. When the man approached me he told me that the ticket agent was holding the ticket and that there was a big "mistake" about which the agent had to call the project. All the above explanation that I learned later was lost on him because he did not understand English. The ticket agent had asked him to wait while he took care of the West-bound passengers first, since their train was leaving earlier, before he called the project. The agent took care of the other passengers and then called the project and suggested and got approval to change the tickets to read via Ogden.

When I explained all this to the family they were so appreciative that they almost cried. This was certainly unexpected consideration-- so different from camp. "There are some nice 'Hakujins' aren't there?" the old man exclaimed and then turned to the station agent and bowed and thanked him in broken English.

There was another case of a family of three going to Chicago. There was a middle-aged man and his wife and an aged mother. Vouchers had been issued for them calling for two intermediate tickets and a lower berth, but only a coach ticket for the man. This meant that the family would be separated because the Pullman and coach sections were in two different trains. They were unwilling to be separated. It would have been a simple matter in normal times for the man to have paid the difference and gotten another intermediate ticket and a Pullman space, but in these days the extra Pullman space is well nigh impossible at the last moment. Although I finally persuaded them to spend an extra five dollars, get an intermediate ticket and take a chance on Pullman space-- they did finally board the Pullman section--I could not help but feel that whoever was responsible for making reservations at the project was not worrying at all about family ties. That person could very easily have suggested at the time that the man could pay the little extra and get the additional space and then have made the reservation for him at the same time. It is a two-day ride to Chicago from Shoshone and it was almost necessary for the aged mother to have a berth.

I have already cited the cases of the ten families that had three-day notices served and were forced to leave six days earlier than the date that had already been approved for them by the relocation division. I do not believe that it was the intent of that portion of Administrative Order 289 permitting changes in departure dates that dates be stepped up. It was rather to permit later departures, as I understand. The notorious three-day notice case is that of an old man, T. Nakawatase. This man is 74 years old. Although the departure date had been set for September 22, 1945, his old-age pension acceptance had not come through



and with approval of the relocation division his departure was reset for October 16. On October 10, however, at the request of the Welfare Section a three-day notice was served on him to be out of the Center by the 12th. It was later explained by the project attorney that the date set was less than three days from the time of the notice because his old-age pension acceptance had come through, and anyway he was on a list to leave a month previous. (It should be said that the project attorney is essentially a fair person and was acting on orders.) On the 12th an Internal Security man and the project attorney went to the barrack of the old man and picked him up, dressed as he was in dirty jeans and other old clothes. Minus baggage or any of his personal belongings he was taken to Shoshone and put out onto the station platform. The men who brought him tried to hand him an envelope containing his ticket to Seattle, \$37.00 in cash, representing his grant and some other monies owed him, his ration book and travel permit. He refused to take the envelope so it was slipped under his arm. He let it fall to the ground but the men left him. A Caucasian friend tried to reason with Nakawatase that since he was at the station he might as well go on to Seattle--the friend would see that his baggage was forwarded on to him. This the man refused. The men who brought him were sought out--they were at a restaurant--and the envelope handed back to them with the plea that they do something about taking him back to camp. Otherwise he would be stranded in Shoshone many miles from Minidoka. Something was done all right. The men called on the Shoshone sheriff and had him put the man on the train when it pulled in. After seating the old man in one of the coaches the sheriff laid the envelope on his lap and turned to the conductor and said, "See that this man gets to Seattle." The conductor said that he could not be responsible for the man and that if he should want to get off at the next or any intermediate station he could not be prevented from doing so. Nakawatase was still on the train when it pulled out.

The closing of the buildings housing the laundry, bath and toilet facilities brought bitterness and resentment but in addition created additional hardship for the old and infirm and families with small children, particularly with babies. While I was there on the night of the 16th the fire siren began screeching. The fire was in the "laundry" building of block 42. It had started in the boiler room. The story that I got from residents milling about the fire as it was being put out was that just that morning the building had been locked up by "two men from the 'hill'." Had there been a fire in the boiler? A man who had been volunteering for some time to keep the boiler going told me that he had built a good fire in the boiler that morning because quite a number of folk were leaving the next day and they wanted to get their last washing done. Women were at their wash when the men came to close the building. They had pleaded with the men to wait at least until they had finished with their wash. They were told to leave and the men turned off the water, nailed shut the windows and the doors were padlocked. I asked the volunteer boiler man if the men had put out the fire in the boiler before shutting off the water. No, the fire was still going strong in the boiler, he claimed. Even to a casual observer it was evident that the fire had started in the boiler room. The fire chief's report verifies this observation. All this, too, was part of and the results of "the program."

In block 1 was a family of seven, two of the five small children still in diapers. The young mother was kept busy washing daily. They were leaving on the 21st, along with three other families in the same block. On the 18th, just three days prior to their departure and only five days prior to the closing of the Center, their bath and laundry building was locked up. True enough, they could go to block 4, not too far away, but one can't put babies under the shower, so all the water for their baths had to be carried from two block's away. When I went to see the family the young mother was busy putting the babies to sleep amid all the confusion of packing and said with tears in her eyes, "Why couldn't they wait just three more days."

Protests had been made and were being made during the time that I was there, but to no avail. It was always explained that the minimum of services was being rendered, and so they were, at a minimum. True enough, many of the remaining residents had been recalcitrant but that does not call for retaliation. It certainly seemed evident that some of the A.P. were after their "pound of flesh." With so few remaining and fewer still who were articulate, the protests were feeble. The administration remained adamant.

I hope and trust that other centers not yet closed have not resorted to similar policies and methods. If, however, there is a tendency in this direction I trust that this report will serve as a deterrent. I am



certain that the official Minidoka Project Closing Report will contain little, if any, of the material that I have included. There are much more "pleasant" things to report. In terms of dollars and cents the management was efficient. The majority of residents, outwardly at least, had cooperated very well. The departure schedules were well-adhered to and so the graph showing the curve of departures will probably be a beautiful straight line. Minimum "services" were being maintained. Welfare cases for the most part were taken care of. Economy measures were taken--fuel, electricity, food and manpower were conserved. Requests for transportation had not broken down seriously. And to top it all, the Center was closed eight days ahead of the "deadline." (It probably was a coincidence that the pheasant hunting season in that part of Idaho opened the same day that the Center officially closed on the 23rd. Ironically, some of the A.P. were cleaning their shotguns on the 22nd as they discussed plans for a "manhunt" for which volunteers from among the staff were being asked to search every barrack for any stray residents that might have been missed.) In terms of "the program" the closing of the Minidoka project was "efficiently" done, but in terms of human values it was a dismal failure.

#### ADDENDA

This report would be incomplete without a word about the conditions to which the residents are returning. It was fortunate for most of the remaining Minidoka residents that they were returning to the State of Washington where the Welfare Department is unusually cooperative. Practically all of the definitely welfare cases had been taken care of and their residence eligibility established. Part of this was also due to the fact that the one section of the Minidoka Project that almost "defied" the administration in their efforts to help the people was the Welfare Section. Cooperation from the District WRA offices in Seattle, Tacoma and Portland was fair. As much cannot be said of the Sacramento District office into which area a sizable number of Minidokans were returning. (This was the office that had been giving the Granada WRA a few headaches while I was there. Part of this non-cooperation is probably due to the difficulties in dealing with the Sacramento County agencies.)

The temporary accommodations in which the residents are being housed are not desirable and are terribly crowded. Permanent housing is still a big question mark. Most of the hostels provide little privacy and the facilities are inadequate. Upon rows upon rows of cots in dormitory fashion with very little room for passageways, sleep men, women and children. Houses and apartments of returned evacuees are overcrowded with incoming friends and relatives. The fortunate ones are those that have been able to get into the better types of Federal housing. Letters from those that have returned to the West Coast cite conditions sometimes unbelievable. One letter from Sacramento tells of a few evacuees having slept in the railroad stations, in the parks and under culverts and bridges. Another letter from a man who had gone to Los Angeles and is now at the Lomita Air Strip camp states that the camp is not quite as good as were most of the Assembly Centers. He is living in a 12x15 room for which he and his wife pay \$15.00 per month. Furnishings consist of two cots. (Period.) A table and chairs have been promised. They pay per person 20 cents for breakfast and 30 cents for lunch and dinner. Each family had put in an initial five dollars so that needed additional equipment and staple foods could be purchased to start off the messhall operations. No cooking is allowed in the barracks so that as before the families will not have any semblance of home life. It is interesting to note that some of the people having gotten used to living in close proximity are putting up with these inconveniences and many are loath to live apart in more desirable houses that may become available.

Employment is becoming more difficult and even at best most of the jobs available to returning evacuees are in the service types of work. In California the former gardeners are much in demand and former domestics are eagerly awaited. Those that are willing to take work of this sort, washing dishes, doing janitor work, butlering and other domestic jobs, are finding employment. Former farm laborers are in demand but every effort is made to keep out the owner or tenant farmer. In Seattle the "produce avenue" situation is bad. Employment in produce houses is impossible and the few returned farmers that have produce to sell are being boycotted and cannot deliver their own vegetables to market. They have had to resort to marketing either through friendly Caucasians or shipping their produce to other markets.

Nisei returning to the West Coast are finding it most difficult. While Nisei in the East and Middle West are accepted and are working at jobs



that more nearly use the skills and training learned in schools, the Nisei on the West Coast are confined to dishwashing or janitoring for the most part. Younger Nisei are finding adjustments difficult as they return to Coast schools. They are often made to feel out of place, they are left out of recreational participation and in many schools the officials as well as the teachers are brusque and unsympathetic. Most of the Nisei are, therefore, undergoing terrific adjustment problems. The following excerpts from a letter sent October 19 from a 17 year old boy who returned to Seattle probably sum up very well the Nisei reaction to the West Coast:

"Who were at the train? Not a WRA person around as far as I could tell. No citizens groups. No church groups, but Rev. Andrews with his car; he took most of the people to their homes. Lots of personal friends at the station.

Where did the people go? Well, most of the large families went to the Jap-school (the former Japanese language school building) others to their church hostels.

Conditions at the hostels - my hostel conditions are all shot, no hot water, all the families cook on one stove. Other hostels are said to have hot water and other conditions I haven't seen. Well, looks all shot anyway.

Where are other persons of Japanese ancestry living? At other people's homes or at hostels.

Jobs? Boys out of schools--dishwashers mostly and other like jobs.

Recreation? No recreation or places to go and have socials.

Treatment? OK so far, but some of the small kids around 6, 7 years of age they have had some bad experiences."

Although there were and still are quite a number of younger Nisei remaining in the centers that are compelled to accompany their parents back to the West Coast and into conditions as I have described above, the most pathetic cases are those Nisei who have found good jobs in the East or Middle West and are now being called back by their parents to return with them to California, Oregon or Washington. Some such Nisei are enthusiastic about going back to "Sunny California" but invariably find conditions back there that cannot be compensated for by all the sunshine in the world. Some of the more independent Nisei who have thus gone back have returned again to the more tolerant atmosphere of the East and Middle West.

More recently there is a noticeable trend in Rohwer, Tulalake and Poston for remaining residents to consider opportunities in other parts of the country other than California. This is not necessarily a loss of nostalgia for California, but a realization that "impossible" conditions there are no idle rumors. Enough letters have come from recent resettlers to the camps telling about the critical housing and employment situations to turn the tide. It is a hopeful trend.

The implications of all these mal-adjustments and problems to all of us who are working on resettlement of Japanese Americans should not be lost. It is true that in terms of numbers this minority group is a small part of the total of all minorities. However, because of the acute dislocations and because this is possibly the first time in United States history that one whole set of people has been subjected to mass uprooting, involving fundamental principles of citizenship and human rights, the problem requires special consideration. Basic principles involved have been sharpened in the public mind because of the vast interest aroused by the press. Everyone who believes in equal rights for all without regard to race, creed or color will recognize that this is an opportunity not to be missed. While the issues are pointed, while the public interest is aroused we should work toward gaining another round in our fight for human rights for all people.

Sincerely yours

JOBU YASUMURA  
Department of Cities