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ALL CENTER CONFERENCE

AND

DIRECTOR MYER'S VISIT

## INTRODUCTION

The announcement by the WRA of its decision to close the relocation centers on or before January 2, 1946 shattered the sense of security held in varying degrees by the evacuees at Poston. They had been sheltered in the Colorado River Relocation Center for the past thirty odd months and had been convinced, rightly or wrongly, that they would be able to remain, if they so desired, in this "refuge center" for the duration. In receiving the news, only a small portion of the population was delighted in the prospect of leaving the center, for they had been obliged to remain here due to parental objection or due to other deterrents. There were a few others who took the news with submissive placidity; they believed that there was nothing that could be done to change the governmental policy. A vast number of the evacuees, on the other hand, was neither happy nor acquiescent; they reacted either in negative or in negativistic manners --- varying from being violently vociferous to being passively defiant --- motivated by the various sorts of fear, by the desire for economic advantages, and by other factors, which have been described previously. (See RSN: The Initial Impact of The Army Announcement of Rescission of The Exclusion Orders And The WRA Announcement of Liquidation of The Relocation Centers)

With the promulgation, the resistance to accelerated relocation and the eventual closing of the center began to crystallize in the community. The evacuees cried that they could not

leave the center; therefore, the center should not be closed. They argued that steps should be taken to stop the WRA from executing its policy of closure. They shouted that they should unite against the closing of the center. Indeed, there was a great danger of emergence of an active and organized obstruction to relocation; there was a tendency that some of the residents might coercively prevent others from relocating.

On the face of the vociferous resistance, the evacuees that were planning to relocate or in favor of relocation took to a cover; they became secretive about their intentions and plans for the future. In order to leave the center they prepared quietly lest they might ~~unduly~~ be ostracized by their fellow residents as unduly cooperating with the WRA policies and thereby jeopardizing the chance of maintaining status quo for the duration. The responsible evacuee leaders were quick to observe the danger of chaos, and they undertook a program, although with most of them accidentally or inadvertently, whereby (1) those who were able to relocate were encouraged to do so; and (2) for those who could not or did not wish to relocate, they promised to do the utmost to fulfill their desire ~~of~~ remaining in the center for the duration. In other words, the leaders endeavored to check and keep anti-relocation agitation under control so that the free flow of egress be uninterfered.

Meanwhile, in order to satisfy the evacuees who were clamoring against the closing of the center, the Unit I Local Council as early as December 20, 1944 and the Community Council a little afterwards adopted a proposal to invite delegates from other relocation centers to solve newly created problems jointly and,

if possible, to make a united stand against the policy of center closure. The Poston proposal, however, was tabled shortly afterwards, for some of the other centers had simultaneously been planning similar conferences independently of one another and an agreement had been reached so that the Community Council of the Central Utah Relocation Center at Topaz be given the sponsorship for the All Center Conference.

During the month of January, 1945, the resistance to relocation and to the policy of center closure seemed to have slightly decreased. To say the least, the vociferous expressions attacking the WRA and the blatant criticisms of the relocatees had greatly waned. Nevertheless, the change in the attitudes and the behaviors of the evacuees were not to be attributed to their greater acceptance of the new WRA policies; rather, no longer were they in need of such violent expressions and negativistic behaviors to assert themselves for the lack of opposition. The resistance to the WRA policies for closing of the center had become established in the mores. None of them disagreed or wanted to disagree with the contention that the center could not be closed and should not be closed. Every evacuee agreed that there were many evacuees who could not leave the center for the duration and the Government should provide for them here. Most of the relocating evacuees, too, were careful to explain to others that they had to relocate for special personal reasons, which did not apply to the others, although they were anxious to remain in the center to the last days; they went out of their way to assure the others that they were not in

favor of the WRA policy of "forcing" evacuees out of the center. Some other evacuees made their relocation plans quietly, while at the same time arguing articulately that the center should be maintained for the duration. The Administration, too, was not willing to irritate the residents unduly; they avoided aggressive execution of the post-exclusion program. The Relocation Division employees processed relocatees quietly without fanfare.

By and large, the careful planning jointly by the Administration and the evacuee leaders had succeeded in preventing the resistance taking forms of overt and irrational agitation. Towards the end of January, the community as a whole appeared to be orderly and peaceful. Nevertheless, even the superficial observers could not fail to detect the inherent and latent resistance to the policy of closing of the center. The residents still believed firmly that the center should not be closed and they should not be forced out. The various incidents of violence and "hoodlumism" and the news of racial hatred in the Western States and elsewhere were enough to reinforce the morbid fear of the outside, and thereby kept the resistance smoldering. In other words, it was only a precarious calm that existed at the time in the community --- on the surface there was no overt agitation against the WRA policy of liquidation, while below the surface the resistance remained unabated with a dangerous potentiality of bursting out at any time with disturbing stimuli.

Against this background, the Community Council received an invitation from the ~~Topaz~~ Community Council for participation in the All Center Conference to be held at Salt Lake City dur-

ing the month of February. On January 25, the Poston Council met and voted to accept the invitation. The acceptance was immediately followed by preparations --- the dissemination of the information and the selection of the delegates. The Local Councils and the Block Managers of the three Units held their respective meetings to devise the method of selecting the delegates and the platform for which the Poston residents would be pledged. Accordingly, in Unit I, a general election was approved as the method of selecting the delegates and many different demands and appeals were formulated as the platform in the block meetings, which were held during the first week of February. As described previously, many of these block meetings were tumultuous, indicating the existence of intense resistance to the WRA policies. The composite platform contained many requests for which, to say the least, the united efforts <sup>at</sup> ~~at~~ the conference would not be sufficiently to force the WRA to concede --- many of them could be termed as impossible and irresponsible. For one, the delegates were to be instructed to request the WRA for the maintenance of the center in status quo, in direct opposition and incompatible with the newly promulgated policies of the WRA. It was true that a few residents realized that such requests could be materialized at the conference; nonetheless, they were determined to instruct the delegates with the impossible platform, although in general they did not anticipate a success. (See RSN: The Developments Leading to Participation in The All Center Conference And The Visit of The Representative of The Spanish Embassy)

In this portentous atmosphere, the most successful elec-

tion in the Poston history was held on February 7, 1945; and facing <sup>A</sup>~~the~~ most difficult assignment Yoshitaro Katow, the Chairman of the Executive Board, and Minory Okamoto, the Chairman of the Local Council, were elected to represent Unit I. Together with John Kubota and James Takashima, who through different methods of selection had been chosen to represent Units II and III respectively, they were ready to depart to Salt Lake City. The Community Council then approved the proposal of allowing Nobuo Matsubara, a member of the Unit I Executive Board, to accompany the delegation as their secretary.

In commenting on the platform, which the delegates were instructed to present to the All Center Conference, the evacuee leaders shook their heads in despair. They knew that the requests of the residents were impossible; they were aware of the fact that Director Myer and his subordinates would come to the conference to do their best to sell the program of relocation in their own terms and not in terms of the evacuees' thinking. They had forewarned the residents not to be overly optimistic as to the outcome of the conference. Yet there ~~ex~~<sup>is</sup>ted many, especially among the older evacuees, who thought that the WRA could be subdued to change its course. The leaders were faced with a responsibility of preparing the community for an inevitable disappointment so that the delegates on their return might not be unjustifiably criticized for failing to achieve the impossible task. Both Katow and Okamoto, too, were pessimistic as to the outcome of the conference. They could not promise anything but sheer determination "We will do our best."

The Poston delegation left for Utah on February 14. On

departing they issued the following message through the Japanese section of the Poston Chronicle: (Translated from the Japanese original in the February 14th issue of the Poston Chronicle)

With the severance of diplomatic relations between Japan and America, the national policy of the United States decided to evacuate us, all of persons of Japanese ancestry, from California. Thus, maintaining our pride that we are the model, civilized nationals that conform to the national law, and as we were dictated by the national policy, we relocated to the center with the Nisei, citizens of the United States, who shed tears of indignation for being exiled from the places of their birth.

Subsequently we have reached this day struggling desperately to establish a new society here. Suddenly the plan to close the center has been announced. Nevertheless, at the time of evacuation we had lost everything, the fruit of blood and tears of the past several tens of years. Except a small number of people, most of us are under the circumstances that we cannot leave the center easily.

Therefore, it has been decided that the All Center Conference will be held at Salt Lake City. We will attend the conference taking the requests and proposals of our fellow residents. Laying the grave responsibility closely to our hearts, we are determined to do our best, though little that may be, in order to prove worthy of your expectations.

On departing we beg your support.

ALL CENTER CONFERENCE

The accounts of the All Center  
Conference will be incorporated  
here

DEVELOPMENTS AT POSTON  
DURING THE CONFERENCE

The All Center Conference was first conceived by the evacuee leaders and supported by evacuees at large as a means of consolidating the resistance against the newly announced decision of the WRA to close the relocation centers. They wanted to organize a united front for the maintenance of the centers in the status quo. However, having realized the difficulty of convincing the WRA that the centers should not be closed for the duration, they devised several conditions --- primarily, more and better assistance and ~~guarant~~<sup>ies</sup> for safety --- with which they would reluctantly consent to the center. In this manner, the initial attempt of the two pronged attack against the WRA was worked out.

In the subsequent weeks, as the WRA officials has explained the post-exclusion program fully and had begun to put it into actual operation, the evacuees leaders became aware of the futility of forcing the WRA to veer from the already announced course, at least for the present. As the realization of futility had crystalized with many of the leaders or had vacillated with others, the Community Council received the invitation to the conference. At the time, the interest for such a conference had waned; many of the responsible leaders were as a matter of fact ~~were~~ glad that the issue of the All Center Conference had generally been forgotten. It was therefore natural that they were annoyed when they heard that the Council accepted the invitation; they did not want the dormant and latent resistance to the policy of cen-

ter closure revitalized and become violent again. Unit Administrator Sumida, for example, stated in this manner:

"People were getting quiet now and just getting to settle down. They were forgetting about the conference. Now that the inviation has been recieved and the whole thing has to be discussed in the blocks, we have to hear many nasty words about the WRA. The camp will be very noisy again for the next several weeks. It would have been all right if we didn't have this conference."

Supervisor of Block Managers Nishimoto, too, did not like to see the issue of center closure brought up on the surface again. "So, after all, they have decided to hold this conference," lamented Nishimoto. "We have worked hard enough to quiet down the community. We have succeeded in controlling the resistance. Now this conference had to come."

Nishimoto realized that the inherent resistance to the new WRA policies had not lessened. He knew that the rank and file of evacuee were still just as adamant and insistent as before in opposing the policy of closing of the center. It was evident that the resistance could falre up again with proper stimulation. "I suppose that those irrational, heckling Issei will have field day," Nishimoto added. "I guess we have to hear a lot of violent expressions and emotional statements. If we led them right, we might be able to let them ~~to~~ blow off some of their latent steam."

M. Okamoto and others close to the Community Council were not<sup>as</sup> enthusisatic about the conference as they had first proposed it. They acted as if they had to go on with the preparations unwillingly as the responsibility had been thrust upon them. One of them remarked:

"We started talking about it (the conference). I guess we

have to finish it whether we like it or not."

When Chairman Okamoto presented the proposal of the All Center Conference to the regular meeting of the Unit I Local Council on January 31, it was obvious that no preparations had been made in advance for participation. The Community Council had dropped the matter early in January, and had not made any attempt to study "the wishes and demands of the people" to be proposed to the meeting. The leaders close to the Community Council had assumed that preparations would not be necessary inasmuch as the Poston residents in general were opposed to the closure policy and they would be required <sup>merely</sup> to oppose the WRA. The lack of advance planning was embarrassing to Okamoto when he was asked in the meeting by the Local Councilmen for some basic proposals with which they could conduct the block meetings. He promised to mimeograph and distribute the Heart Mountain document, which was the fruit of a long study by the leaders at Heart Mountain. The document contained the various requests for the two classes of people, viz., those who wanted to remain in the center for the duration and those who wanted assistances and guarantees in order to relocate. Thus, the two pronged attack against the WRA had been embodied in the document, and suited the trend of thinking of the evacuees at Poston. The block meetings quickly adopted those demands in the document as their own, and the Poston platform was formulated with a few additions and modifications.

It was easy to formulate those demands, but to obtain concessions from the WRA for those demands was entirely another matter. The document contained ~~the~~ demands, which the WRA would not concede in any way at this stage. Many of the evacuees re-

alized the difficulty of getting even a minor concession, but they were not hesitant in making many unreasonable demands.

A sophisticated urban Issei characteristically remarked:

"Well, is there any harm in asking? Unless you ask, you can't get it."

Another Issei stated similarly, representing the prevalent attitude:

"If we can't stay in the center, we might as well try to get most out of the WRA. It is to show the WRA how difficult it is to close the center."

The leaders were, however, worried over the presence of many evacuees in the community who wishfully expected that the crux of the present post-exclusion program could be reversed as a result of this conference. Some of the PRA members were especially guilty of hoping that the policy of closing the schools could be reversed by appealing to the WRA through the delegates. (Infra., pp ) Against the optimism the responsible evacuees issued warnings repeatedly. They publicized that the main purpose of the conference was to exchange information and ideas among the delegates from the various centers and reach some agreements as to their future course in jointly championing the interests of evacuees. The Supervisor of Block Managers, too, warned the Block Managers and instructed them to caution the residents against wishful thinking.

In the regular meeting on February 13, Supervisor Nishimoto informed the Block Managers that an arrangement had been made with the delegates for transmission of daily reports from Salt Lake City. The Supervisor would prepare copies of the reports as soon as they were received and distribute them to the blocks,

he said. The Managers were in turn asked to keep their respective residents informed of the proceedings of the conference. Nishimoto again reminded the Managers that the residents ought to be cautioned against optimistic anticipations as to the outcome. He went on to say as follows:

"I have warned you again and again not to expect any definite concession from the WRA out of this meeting at Salt Lake City. The delegates are entrusted with an impossible task of asking the WRA to maintain the center in status quo and to provide the relocatees with more assistances and guarantees. As I have said often and I am sure you will agree with me, the outcome will not be anything which will satisfy the wishful thinker or the 'sit-tighter'. Please inform them whenever you have an opportunity that this is the first conference of this sort and we cannot achieve anything beyond mapping out our future course for opposing the WRA and its policy of center closure. The delegates did their job well if they had succeeded in laying a foundation for future conferences to pursue the fight to achieve the ultimate aim of these residents here --- that is, the maintenance of the center for the duration.

"You will receive reports from the delegates at Salt Lake City. I am asking you to utilize these reports to the fullest possible advantage in educating the people that all of us, let alone the delegates to the conference, are faced with a tremendous job before we can make the WRA concede that the center should not be closed."

After Nishimoto's speech, one of the Managers reported that most of the residents had participated in the block meetings and the election as a method of demonstrating against the WRA and that they as a whole were aware of the difficulty. Several other Managers, on the other hand, argued that there were many evacuees whose outlook on the outcome were not realistic. They argued that the Managers should do their best to convince these evacuees of what this first conference could accomplish.

Thus, the channel of communication from the delegates at Salt Lake City to the residents at Poston was established. The

use of propaganda through the communication system to prepare the residents for the return of the delegates to Poston was planned. On February 16, the first telegram was received from the delegation at Salt Lake City. It read as follows:

SALT LAKE CITY UTAH FEB 15 1945

ARRIVED IN SALT LAKE AT 630 PM. ALL FEEL FINE.  
WEATHER VERY COLD. CONVEY OUR BEST REGARDS TO  
ALL

POSTON DELEGATES 921 AM.

The Community Council made copies and distributed them to the Unit Administrators, the Supervisors of Block Managers, the Local Councils, and the Executive Board of the three Units. The Supervisor's office in Unit I in turn made more copies and sent them to the Block Managers. The Managers then read them to the residents in their respective Mess Halls at meal time.

Early in the morning of February 17, evacuees in the administrative area were excited over the news of shootings and the burning of a Nisei's home in the Fresno district. Wild speculations and interested discussions started quickly when a Nisei had reported that he had heard the news over the radio station KNX in Los Angeles the night before. About 10 o'clock in the same morning, the Los Angeles newspapers reached the project; the editions carried the news spectacularly. The newspaper stories further accelerated the spreading of the news throughout the community. The Los Angeles Times of ~~the~~ February 17th, for instance, printed the news on the front page accompanied by a picture of the burning house, 4½ inches long and four columns wide, under the headline "Fresno Shotgun Squad Hunted in War on Nisei". It reported that a group of unknown assailants

"blasted hundreds of pellets into a house occupied" by S. J. Kakutani, "returned American-born Japanese". It also reported that about the same time on the night of February 15 the home and furnishings of Bob Morishige in the nearby town of Selma were destroyed by the fire set by unknown incendiary. The article mentioned at the end that "four days ago three shotgun blasts struck the home of Frank Osaki, who returned from an Arizona relocation center three weeks ago." On an inside page in the same edition of the Los Angeles Times, another article was printed reporting the same incidents.

The surprise and interest of evacuees at Poston over the news of three incidents which took place in rapid succession were great. They were surprised because they had believed that the Central California areas were free from rabid racial hatred and the potentiality of racial disturbances. They were greatly interested ~~over~~ in the news, because their contention that the outside world was not friendly to the evacuees was vindicated. They were amused, because Central California now had to be included among the "danger zones" together with Imperial Valley, the Salinas-Watsonville area, <sup>Orange County, Lancaster,</sup> and Gardena. The young and the old expressed alike that it was premature to return to California at this time. Some of them went further to reason that the WRA might be convinced of the advisability of keeping the centers open beyond the announced date.

The most prevalent reaction was expressed by a Nisei evacuee from Delano, about twenty-five years of age, in this manner:

"I knew that it was too early for those people to return

to California. We should wait for a long while before we plan to go to California. It isn't safe yet. You can't tell what might happen."

A Hawaii-born Nisei, evacuated from Los Angeles, about thirty-five years of age, said that he had known such incidents would occur at the beginning. He returned to Poston to take his family out having prepared to farm in New Mexico. He stated:

"I knew that. I knew things like that will happen. Sure, I want to go back to California. But not for a while. I don't want anything to happen to my family out there. That's the reason I went out to New Mexico to look around for a farm. I found a place. People were nice out there. I didn't notice any race discrimination. I am going to take my family to New Mexico. It's near Albuquerque. I am going to farm for one year or so. I don't know if I can make money or not. That's one of those things. Probably I will return to Los Angeles after one year or so."

A Nisei of Zoot-suiter type, about twenty years old, expressed forcefully:

"Hell, that's what you get for going back to California. Why go to California?"

Another Nisei remarked:

"California? Not me! I'm going back East somewhere."

An Issei, a resident of the block with urban evacuees, probably about fifty years old, stated:

"They are telling us to relocate. How can we? This is a good proof. It's not safe for us to relocate. The WRA should realize that. No, I'm going to stay here until the war ends."

Another Issei, apparently a farmer in the pre-evacuation days, had this to say:

"California has been opened. But what is the use? We can't go back there. This is wartime. It's natural that those people are mad about the Japanese and want to harm us. It was bad enough before the war. I can't see how situations are better in California right now."

An Issei rural evacuee was resentful over the fact that many evacuees were planning to return to California:

"Many guys trust the WRA and believe what it says. They believe that the WRA is really going to close the center this year, and get excited. They are scared of being forced out by the WRA and are planning to relocate. I know most of them are going to California. They are fools. Let them go back to California if they want. The same thing will happen to those fools."

An Issei about sixty years old wished that more incidents of this sort would aid those that were planning to remain here for the duration. He stated;

"I want more incidents like that. The more the better. Then the WRA will be convinced that they should not close the centers. The WRA will change its mind and will say that we better stay in the centers for the duration. We all know that the centers are the safest place for us, but the WRA doesn't know that yet."

A middle aged Issei remarked sarcastically in English;

"Good old California! Same old gangs of racists!"

A member (Issei) of the Community Council recounted the experience of Itaru Kubota, the former Chairman, who received "uninvited guests" of hoodlums one night to intimidate him when he visited Fresno. Kubota subsequently returned to his home in Fresno in order to "blaze the path for others to return safely", according to one of his friends who quoted him. Kubota believed that the only way to combat the racial discrimination was to have more Japanese return and "educate the Caucasian". The Issei who narrated Kubota's experience added;

"I knew that incidents like these would happen soon. Many people said that Central California is all right for Japanese, but I didn't believe it. Kubota told me that things were not so good out there. It was already in the air when Kubota visited Fresno last month. After all, we, Issei, can't go to any place but to California. So, I think it is wise to stay here and watch how things will turn out in California."

Unit II Administrator Uyeno wondered whether his erstwhile enemy, <sup>Seisugo</sup>~~Seigo~~ Sakamoto, the Chairman of the Unit II Local Council,

would go through with the plan of returning to his former home in Fresno in light of these incidents. The Unit Administrator, a Kibei in his early thirties, seemed to be amused over the situation. Sakamoto had been making plans to direct the return of his friends to their <sup>former</sup> ~~homes~~ homes in the Fresno area; Uyeno reported that Sakamoto had persuaded "more than a half of Block 224" to leave the center with him.

In receiving the news story, Corlies Carter, the Relocation Program Officer, too showed a great concern. He was worried, because he believed that the incidents would greatly increase the already present feeling of insecurity and the fear of the outside, let alone California, and would further retard the slow progress of relocation. He was disturbed over the prospect that the interest and awakening enthusiasm of many evacuees in Unit II, especially, for returning to Central California in the near future might abruptly be halted. With the aid of Mrs. Pauline Brown, the Reports Officer, he sent a telegram of inquiry to Robert Cozzens, the Director of the WRA office at San Francisco. However, when he received a telegram from the San Francisco office the next morning confirming the newspaper story, he was <sup>a</sup> dejected man. He said in a tone of low spirit that he could only hope for the best.

Likewise, the evacuee leaders showed a great deal of anxiety over the news. As the news was discussed widely in the community, they agreed ~~among them~~ to send an instruction to the delegates at Salt Lake City that the "guarantee of life and property" for the relocatee, one of the Poston requests, be strongly presented to the WRA officials at the conference.

Together with a copy of the February 17th edition of the Los Angeles Times, the instruction was dispatched to the delegates via air mail. It is interesting to note that about one week afterwards the rumors of new shootings in the same area were widely circulated in the community. However, upon investigation these new stories were found to be baseless.

During the same turbulent day, February 17, the Community Council received the second telegram from Salt Lake City.

SALT LAKE CITY UTAH FEB 16 1945

CONFERENCE OPENED 10 AM. 27 DELEGATES OF SEVEN CENTERS ATTENDED. PROPOSAL OF CENTERS READ AND DISCUSSED. OUR DELEGATES ARE DOING THEIR BEST. ADVISE RICHARD NISHIMOTO AIR MAIL POSTON PROPOSALS FORTY COPIES.

MATAUBARA 906 AM

From this <sup>night</sup> letter it was evident that the Poston representatives wanted to distribute the proposals of the Poston residents among the delegates from other centers.

On February 20, Secretary Matsubara air mailed the following report: (Translated from the original in Japanese)

#### ALL CENTER CONFERENCE

##### The Names of Representatives

1. Gila: Hiroji Nishimura, Shigeichi Mitsuyoshi, Mitsuru Fukuzawa (Nisei), and Yoriyuki Sato
2. Granada:  
Sakae Kawajiri (Nisei), Shinichi Furuya, and Eiji Urugami
3. Heart Mountain:  
Kaoru Akashi, Minejiro Hayashida, Minokichi Tsunokai, Kumezo Hachimonji, and Shigeichi Kawano
4. Minidoka:  
Yoshito Fujii, Genji Mihara, Tohru Ogawa, and Iwao Oyama

5. Poston:  
(omitted)
6. Rohwer:  
Chuji Fujino, Shitaro Ito, and Shuzo Shingu
7. Topaz:  
Tsuna Watanabe, Shizuo Sasaki, Kiichi Nodohara,  
Ichiji Sugiyama, Masaru Narahara (Nisei), and  
Susumu Yamashita (Nisei)

Secretaries:

Shintaro Murakami, Toshiko Yamamoto (Nisei),  
and Mitsuye Endo (Nisei) All these three from  
Topaz.

REPORT NO. 1

The Salt Lake Conference was opened at 10 A. M., February 16, at a room of the Y.W.C.A., Masaru Narahara, the Chairman of the Topaz Community Council, which sponsored the meeting, having been installed as Temporary Chairman.

27 delegates were present.

The business was taken up after the election of Chairman and Vice Chairmen.

The business discussed and the matter decided were as follows:

1. The reason of Manzanar for not participating. Chairman reported "they could not see the importance of this conference . . ."

A motion was carried to send a telegram asking again for participation.

2. It was decided that both Japanese and English be used during the conference.
3. The Poston proposal -- To submit invitations to different organizations to send representatives to this conference. It was discussed and passed.
4. The selection of the Program Committee (for formulation of agenda)

Mitsuru Fukuda (Gila), Tohru Ogawa (Minidoka), Kumezo Hachimonji (Heart Mountain), Shinichi Furuya (Granada), Shuzo Shingu (Rohwer), Minoru Okamoto (Poston), and Kiichi Nodohara (Topaz).

5. The selection of the committee to arrange proposals.

Yoriyuki Sato (Gila), Iwao Oyama (Mididoka), Shigeichi Kawano (Heart Mountain), Eiji Uragami (Grandea), Yoshitaro Katow (Poston), Ichiji Sugiyama (Topaz), and Chuji Fujino (Rohwer)

6. The resolutions of the various centers were read by their respective delegates and were explained.

(The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 P.M.)

Among those discussed on this day, discussions were tumultuous on (1), (2), (3), and (4). Especially on the question of inviting the Spanish representative, the delegates were divided pro and con sharply and exchanged heated opinions. In addition, during the afternoon conference, the photographer of the Salt Lake Tribune rushed into the conference room without permission and flashed a picture. As a result of vigorous protest, he agreed to expose the film; in return, he asked for a permission to take pictures of the group. At the same time, he asked for the release of news stories. After discussion on these matters, the requests were granted.

#### The Conference -- Second Day

from 9:00 A. M.  
to 5:35 P. M.

The important subjects discussed or resolved during the day -----

1. Report of the Program Committee
2. The committee on resolutions from the centers met to arrange and consolidate the proposals.
3. No news release will be granted unless approved by the conference. This will include the newspapers of the centers.
4. The minutes of the meeting and the resolutions will be printed.
5. The conference expenses will be equally shared by the various centers.
6. It was decided to choose one Spokesman from each center during the session with Director Myer.
7. To establish Resolution Committee

Among these, the selection of personnel for (6) and (7)

were carried over to a meeting in the future.

From tomorrow, February 19, we go into the main conference. Since the proposals from the various centers are to be deliberated, heated arguments are again expected. Discussions on the floor will be lively.

The letter in Japanese from Matsubara was immediately mimeographed and distributed to the blocks. (No copies in English were made.) It was reported by some of the Block Managers that many residents, especially the Issei, read the report with much interest, for "they had been waiting for news from Salt Lake City." One of them said, "Their reactions are very good. There is no heckling or irresponsible expression. They seemed to be satisfied with what the delegates are doing."

Telegrams continued to arrive from the delegates. The report received on February 21 read as follows:

SALT LAKE CITY UTAH FEB 20 1945

DISCUSSION ALMOST CONCLUDED. DRAFTING RESOLUTION.  
MEET MYERS TOMORROW MORNING. OPEN SESSION WITH DIS-  
TINGUISHED GUESTS AFTERNOON. WILL REMAIN UNTIL  
SATURDAY NOON. THANKS PROPOSAL COPIES.

MATSUBARA 924 AM

The telegram received on February 22 read as follows:

SALT LAKE CITY UTAH FEB 21 1945

MYER MADE SPEECH ON WRA POLICY. DISCUSSIONS FOLLOWING  
IN OPEN MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF FRIENDLY ORGA-  
NIZATIONS. CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS REMARKS PRESENTED.

MATSUBARA 906 AM

The night letter received on February 24, 1945 read as follows:

SALT LAKE CITY UTAH FEB 25 1945

CONFERENCE CONCLUDED TONIGHT WITH FAREWELL PARTY.  
COMMITTEES STILL WORKING ON RESOLUTIONS AND OTHER  
BUSINESS. EXPECT TO LEAVE HERE TUESDAY.

MATSUBARA 907 AM

The telegram received on the same day stated as follows:

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED. FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON RESPEC-  
TIVE CENTER PROBLEMS CONTINUING. CONFERENCE WILL BE  
CONCLUDED TONIGHT.

MATSUBARA 214 PM

Copies were made of each telegram and each block received one copy of every telegram. In the usual manner, the Block Manager informed his block residents of the content of each telegram at mealtime.

On February 25, the Community Council received the second detailed report via air mail. Secretary Matsubara wrote as follows: (*Translated*)

February 19 -- the Third Day of  
The Conference

Begun at 9:30 A. M.  
at the Japanese Christian Church

The matters decided today:

1. The method of voting -- A motion granting each center one vote was adopted.
2. The selection of the Public Relations Committee.

In order to avoid wrong reporting in the newspapers, the Committee is delegated with the duty to release correct news. At the same time, the Committee is to handle all matters pertaining to public relations.

The Committee is composed of one member from each center. John Kubota was selected on the Committee from Poston.

3. Discussions on compilation of the resolutions from the various centers.

Heated discussions were carried during this session

on the requests of those who wished to relocate and on the reasons of those who could not leave the center.

Adjournment at 6:15 P. M.

(February 18 -- sightseeing trip to the Mormon church in the morning and to Toole in the afternoon.)

February 20 -- the Fourth Day

from 9:30 A. M.  
at Y. W. C. A.

In the morning, the proposals of the various centers were deliberated one by one. In the afternoon, the Resolution Committee was selected. From Poston, Katsumi Takashima became a member of the Committee.

Following this, the delegates discussed matters to be presented to Director Myer in a closed session tomorrow.

(Again they argued among themselves considerably.)

Adjournment at 5:30 P. M.

February 21 -- the Fifth Day

In the morning, the delegates met Director Myer in a closed session.

In the afternoon, an open meeting was held among Director Myer, the delegates, the representatives of the organizations which had been invited, and other public officials. (This is one of the most valuable achievements of this conference.)

February 22 -- the Sixth Day

In the morning, Rev. Nugent, a protestant minister, attended the meeting and gave a speech of encouragement.

Then the delegates debated on the question of to whom the resolution and its copies be mailed. This subject, too, caused the delegates to argue heatedly.

In the afternoon, it was resolved to establish a central organization in order to attain the objectives of the residents of all the centers. It was also resolved that Manzanar be asked to cooperate with other centers in the future so that mutual problems be solved together.

It was agreed unanimously that the resolution be submitted to the Director of the WRA. The Poston delegates worked

hard and <sup>c</sup>will, and most of the Poston proposals were adopted in the main conference.

In the usual manner, this air mailed report was mimeographed and distributed to the blocks.

On February 26, the final night letter was received from Secretary Matsubara. It read as follows:

SALT LAKE CITY UTAH FEB 25 1945

FINAL MEETING OF COMMITTEE HELD SATURDAY NIGHT.  
CORRECTIONS MADE ON RESOLUTIONS. MAILED CORRECTED COPY  
TODAY. DISREGARD PREVIOUS ONE. EXPECT TO LEAVE HERE  
MONDAY NIGHT.

MATSUBARA 924 AM

Thus, the conference was concluded and the delegates sent the words that they were returning to Poston. At the end of February, the interest of evacuees at Poston in the All Center Conference and other means of protesting to the WRA against its policy of center liquidation had decreased. Rarely did they mention the conference, although they read the distributed copies of the information sent from Salt Lake City. Most of them had reached a realistic estimate on the outcome of the meeting; they stated that they could not expect the WRA to announce the reversal of its policy at this time. Some of them remarked that they were satisfied with the conference, because "most of the Poston demands" had been embodied in the final resolution of the conference. They knew that the WRA would probably reject all the demands, they said. As one Issei commented, many residents believed that the fight had just begun.

"The conference is our first step. We can't expect to succeed in getting what we want from the beginning. Time will come when the WRA must change its policy. We don't

have to worry."

Indeed, ~~every~~ few except leaders talked about the conference. The residents in general believed that the WRA could not close the center while thousands of evacuees remained here. They were convinced that circumstances would compel the WRA to reverse its stand at some future date. Many of them thought that the conference was serving the purpose of calling the attention of the WRA that they could not leave the center. There had been nothing since the announcement of the liquidation policy to disturb their contention that the center could not be closed. On the contrary, the subsequent developments corroborated the evacuees' reasoning and arguments. The outside world, especially California, as seen through first hand reports and the newspapers, was hostile to them. The progress of relocation had been much below the estimates of many observers; many residents were surprised, they said, that more people had not left the center. A little more than 200 persons had relocated during January and about the same number of persons would have relocated by the last day of February. The slow progress of relocation assured many that they need not worry about the center closure; it alleviated the feeling of insecurity created by the policy promulgation. An urban Issei evacuee summarized the situation well in the following words:

"The delegates are telling the WRA that we cannot leave the center as easily as the WRA claims. It is backed up by the rate of relocation. Not much people are leaving. I am surprised, though. I thought more people would go out.

"There are a plenty of people here. The WRA cannot kick us out of here. As long as there are so many of us here,

we are all right. The WRA will change its policy. But I don't believe the WRA will announce the change until the last minute."

There were, on the other hand, some evacuees who awaited the return of the delegates anxiously. Supervisor Nishimoto received several inquiries as to the date of their return. One of them characteristically stated:

"They might bring back some interesting news. It is always important to find out how other evacuees at other relocation centers are thinking. Because of the conference sessions, the delegates may have some valuable estimates for the future."

Another Issei, a member of the Unit I Local Council, remarked:

"After we hear the inside stories of the conference we will know what to do next."

The community had regained most of the complacent composure of the days previous to the announcement of the policy of center closure. People were in general not expectant for a successful and satisfying report from the delegates; many of them were quite indifferent as to the outcome, although some showed curiosity for the news. The evacuee leaders had greatly contributed in informing the public that "this was the beginning of a long pull, and the beginning will be hard and disturbing." To this seemingly calm community, the delegates were returning.

## THE REPORTS OF DELEGATES

Late on the night of February 27, 1945, Yoshitaro Katow, Minoru Okamoto, John Kubota, and James Katsumi Takashima, the four delegates who had represented the evacuees at the Colorado River Relocation Center *in* the All Center Conference at Salt Lake City, and Nobuo Matsubara, the Secretary who had accompanied the delegation, returned to Poston. In the morning of February 28, evacuee political leaders scurried around in the administrative area passing the information that the delegates had returned. Many evacuees were anxious to learn of the news on the conference and sought these delegates in their respective offices, although none of them reported to work. Sensing the advisability of presenting the delegates to the Council as early as possible, G. Iseda and S. Yoshikawa, the Chairman and the Public Relations Coordinator respectively, busied themselves with notification to the members of the Council and other preparations for holding a special session of the Community Council on March 1 to hear reports from the delegates.

In the meanwhile, Project Director Mills had heard that the delegates were back. Through Assistant Director ~~Mills~~ John Powell, Mills asked Supervisor Nishimoto to arrange an interview with Katow. It is interesting that Mills did not desire to see Okamoto, whom he distrusted. Although Katow had not been acquainted with Mills and other recent arrivals high in the Administration because he had confined himself in the iso-

lated sphere of the Community Enterprises for more than one year before he became the Chairman of the Executive Board, he was generally well regarded among the appointed personnel due to the verbal "boosting" by Powell and others older in the point of service here among the staff members.

Answering the call from Nishimoto, Katow came to see the Supervisor on the afternoon of February 28. The delegate immediately gave a brief description of the conference. The meeting at Salt Lake City, in his opinion, was disorganized and irresponsible. Only did the presence of the capable Nisei representatives save the conference from becoming a chaos and failure. Katow accused the older representatives of emotionally unbalanced and unrealistic; the Issei delegates were prone to argue on the points of the international law and to rely on the Japanese Government as a panacea for the evacuee problems in America.

"Issei are no good," Katow lamented. "They are too old. They don't know who they are. They forget that they are enemy aliens. Every other words they must say something about asking the Japanese Government to do this or that. They get excited and make impassioned speeches. And when the speeches are concluded, we don't know what the speakers are talking about. It's awful. Don't send Issei to any of conferences of this sort. It's s shame for the whole Japanese population in America. At least, the delegates should remember that we have been in America for more than thirty and forty years and lived here as law abiding residents. We must live in Aermica after the war. There is no mistake about that. I don't care what people say

about going abck to Japan after the war. They can't kid themselves forever. It will be only a small number of people that will return to Japan. Most of us are going to remain in this country. So, we should act accordingly. We should continue to act like law abiding residents. We must avoid irrational acts and expressions. We must not act like a bunch of people who are not grateful to America for what she had provided in the past. We must forget ~~about~~ Japan when we are dealing with the WRA problems."

"These Issei delegates acted like they were presenting requests to the Spanish Consul or somebody like that," Katow continued to express his disgust. "Many of these Issei were a kind of fools we are familiar with in the centers. They think that Japan is all mighty and before her the world will shrink with fear. They believe that ~~the~~ American will do anything if Japan tells it to do so. Those delegates can't think; their heads are outmoded. It is dangerous for the whole Japanese population to entrust them with such a grave responsibility. We must avoid that in the future."

"Some of the requests which they asked to be embodied in the resolution were foolhardy and irrational. A copy of the resolution is to be sent to the President of the United States. We could not stop them from embodying those crazy requests in the Japanese original. But when our committee worked overnight in translating them into English, we deleted all the objectionable points without the knowledge of other members of the conference. People on the outside will think we are crazy if we included those things in the English version. Those Issei don't

know that we changed the content in the translation. You will understand what we were up against. For instance, we changed "demands" in the Japanese original to "petition" and "recommendation" in the English version. Those old people don't realize the seriousness of demanding anything from the government of a nation. They are fools. There are other revisions in the English resolution. If you compare them, you will see what we deleted. Of course, this will meet with your approval."

Regarding the interview requested by Director Mills, Katow was reluctant. He reasoned that he had not reported to the "people" of Poston yet, whom he had represented at the conference, and questioned the propriety of seeing Mills in advance. "After all, we were paid by the people," Katow said. "We didn't get paid by the WRA; the WRA had refused to pay our expenses. It's people's money that we have spent. So I believe we should report to the people first."

After he was persuaded and assured that the interview would be treated confidential<sup>ly</sup>, he acceded in going to see Director Mills in the company of Nishimoto. First, Mills was warned that the interview be kept confidential, for the delegates had not made reports to the community. Then Katow began to explain, "We gathered facts and studied facts." He reported that the delegates from other centers had brought tangible information or statistical data analyzing the deterrents to relocation. It was obvious, Katow explained, that the problem of center liquidation was regarded more serious than at Poston and extensive studies had been made in advance of the meeting. In deliberating on these "facts", Katow was surprised that the deterrents pre-

sented did not vary appreciably from one center to another; evacuees at the various centers were confronted more or less with identical problems in leaving the centers.

According to Katow, these problems were arranged and studied further by the Agenda Committee, on which he served as a member. In studying these problems, it was found that the center population could be divided into three groups, viz.,

1. Those who are able to relocate in the near future. Some of them are able bodied and can seek employment on the outside. Some others have property. Still some others have children that have relocated and reestablished themselves.
2. Those that desire to reestablish themselves and their families on the outside, but they are fearful for themselves and their families because of the economic losses which they had incurred at the time of evacuation and age, dependents, and other reasons. These people can be relocated with more help and better assistance from the WRA.
3. Those that wish to remain in the center until the end of the war.

The available data proved that residents belonging to the first and second groups comprised more than the majority of the population in the various centers. As an example, the Heart Mountain delegates stated that more than 85 percent of their people could not relocate with the present provisions of the WRA or wanted to remain in the center for the duration. The Rohwer data revealed that more than sixty-five percent of the center population belonged to either the first or the second group. The percentage for Poston was estimated at 75-80 percent by Katow. In the opinion of the Poston delegates, the majority of residents in every center was found in the second group; they wanted to leave the center, but could not do so with the grants and guarantee provided by the WRA at present.

All in all, the number of persons that could not leave the centers with the present provisions was found to be between 65 percent and 70 percent of the total number of evacuees now remaining in the centers, estimated to be about 70,000. In Katow's opinion, most of these evacuees could be persuaded to leave the centers if the WRA were willing to provide them with more assistance and tangible proofs of guarantee. "They don't want to live in the centers. Those that must ~~to~~ remain in the centers are very small in number. Most of them want to reestablish themselves on the outside again, but they believe they cannot do so with the present provisions such as twenty - five dollars grants, train tickets, and so on. They are not adequate to go out and start their lives all over after they had lost what they had."

"Facts presented by the delegates from the various centers substantiated these contentions," Katow again stressed the point that the discussions of the delegates had entirely been based on the interview material and statistical data. "For example, the committee of Councilmen at Rohwer sat with WRA interviewers and counseled<sup>e</sup> evacuees to find out why they could not relocate. These interviews were beneficial in finding out the real reasons why people cannot relocate. Many unknown reasons were uncovered, because the evacuees interviewed cooperated. The committee then compiled the results of these interviews and the Rohwer delegates presented the findings of the committee to the conference. At Heart Mountain, too, they did the same thing."

"We presented these facts to Mr. Myer," Katow continued<sup>u</sup> to

explain to Director Mills. "We did not say to Mr. Myer that the centers should not be closed. We said that we cannot leave the centers under the present WRA system of assistance. We don't want to obstruct the government policy. We want to cooperate with the WRA. Mr. Myer promised that he would do everything possible to help these people who want to leave the centers. But he said that has to be on individual basis."

On questioning by Director Mills, Katow continued to explain the content of Myer's speech before the conference. He reported in detail about the five points given by Myer as the reasons that the centers should be closed at the end of this year. "He gave a very good speech," Katow summarized. "He is a very fine man."

"We met a man they called Judge Wolfe. He is a judge of the Utah Supreme Court. He was very sympathetic towards our problems. He said he would <sup>do</sup> everything possible to help us, and told us to help the WRA program as much as possible. He seemed to have known Myer before."

Katow concluded his report with the following illustrations on how some of relocatees were doing in the Salt Lake City area. "I can't say for sure whether those people who have relocated are happy there. They are very busy working<sup>n</sup>, and don't have time to think of anything else but their works. They said they haven't saved anything. You can't save now; things are very expensive. They are living in awful places. Places I saw --- there were five persons in one small room --- there were a couple and two children sleeping in one room at another place. That's just an example about housing. Life outside is not easy."

Katow reported that he had met an evacuee who relocated from one of the centers and attempted to obtain a business license in the city of Leyton. The city, however, refused to issue any business license to persons of Japanese ancestry. The Nisei applicant contested the denial and filed a suit in the court. He was required to hire attorneys to represent him from each of the two warring factions in the city in order to have any fair chance of winning in the trial. The case was now transferred to the court in Salt Lake City having been granted the motion to change the venue. As Katow was told by the Nisei, the cost of the trial had run up to approximately \$7,000. "That was the main reason among other things that the matter of business license was made a major issue during the conference," Katow concluded.

After the interview in Director Mills' office, Katow had an intimate private conversation with Supervisor Nishimoto. The delegate again spoke disdainfully of the Issei at the conference, and cautioned to send younger men as delegates to future conferences. The Issei delegates were unreasonable and irrational from the first day, Katow related. They were argumentative and boisterous; they refused to listen to or grasp the points advanced by other speakers. "I thought the conference was <sup>going to be</sup> split up on the first day because of arguments and quarrels. They fought and fought," Katow reminisced.

In Katow's opinion, the delegates was not aware of the fact that they represented all the evacuees remaining now in the centers. Instead, they advanced their points solely from the in-

terests of the residents in their respective centers. Especially on the question of whether to invite the Spanish representative to the conference, the discussion was sharp and tumultuous. Many of the Issei delegates refused to listen to the argument of the Nisei delegates that the Spanish representative ought not to be invited. "These Issei argued and argued as if they wanted to carry the issue of center closure direct to the Japanese Government. After a long, quarrelsome debate on the issue, the cool heads won out. It was decided that this was a domestic issue and we should deal directly with the American Government and not with any foreign government including the Japanese Government. I admired the guts of the Nisei delegates on this issue. The Issei have lots to learn from the young men. For a while, I thought we were going to pack up and go home."

As Katow put it, Myer would try to close the centers by the end of this year. He was interested in the welfare of the younger people remaining in the centers. "They are American citizens, and it's natural that Myer is worrying about these people. I don't think he or the American Government cares much about the Issei. We are enemy aliens and we can't complain about that. We are fortunate that we have children born in America."

As one of the five reasons why the center should be closed, Myer placed the welfare of these youngsters first and foremost. In Katow's opinion, there was hardly a chance that the schools would be opened this fall. "Myer wants all the school children go to schools on the outside this fall. He is convinced that

to keep them in the center schools or in the centers any longer is not good for them."

Myer insisted, as Katow reported, that the center would be closed; he refused to acknowledge a probability that thousands of evacuees would be left in the centers on the closing date. "In spite of his strong statements, he gave me a feeling that he has some alternative plan when so many thousands are left here. I am sure he knows that he cannot relocate all of us in one year. At one point, however, he gave me an impression that he believed all of us, maybe most of us, will relocate if he gave us more assistance. He hinted that something will be done to give us more financial assistance, but he refused to commit <sup>himself</sup> on that. He said that he could not reveal his future plan because of the Congress and the public."

Speaking of Myer, Katow reported that he was embarrassed when Eisenhower's statement that evacuees would be detained in the relocation centers for the duration and fourteen days. At the conference he evaded the issue <sup>by saying</sup> that such a statement as made by Eisenhower must necessarily <sup>be</sup> changed as time changed government policies. "But he sure looked worried about it. He said, 'Even <sup>though</sup> Mr. Eisenhower said it, I know you wouldn't want to remain in the centers.' One of the delegates from Granada told me that Myer refused to believe it when he was told of the statement by Eisenhower in the little pamphlet during his (Myer's) visit at Granada. Myer said that it must be dema, and said that he wanted to see it in writing. So one of them brought out the pamphlet and showed it to him. Myer read it, but refused to comment on it except 'The conditions changed,

so policies too must change.' There is no question that Myer is worried about that statement. It's same as the Government lying to us."

The delegates at the conference made an arrangement to form a permanent organization to coordinate the activities of the various centers to further the interests of the Japanese in the United States. It was aimed to carry the program much beyond the present goal of obtaining more assistance and better guarantee from the WRA and of fighting for the maintenance of the centers in the status quo. The newly created organization intended to look after the welfare of the Japanese when and after the centers were closed. It planned to establish offices in major cities in the country to carry out its program. "We want to use the conference as the starting point. We decided to establish the headquarters at Topaz for a while. We are going to grow gradually. These things are not in the official minutes of the conference, but we discussed a lot about this. People (the delegates) talked against the JACL. They were not satisfied with the JACL. They wanted to form a bigger and better organization than that. They don't trust the JACL. This organization will include not only the Nisei but also the Issei. It is going to treat both Issei and Nisei alike as the Japanese."

This organization, according to Katow, would meet whenever necessary as the Topaz headquarters directed it. It was, however, agreed that at first such a conference would be called every six months. The discussion on the permanent organization carried much further into the future; the delegates made a ten-

tative plan to send an observer to "the peace conference between the United States and Japan." "We are thinking far ahead," reported Katow proudly. "Everybody agreed that a representative ought to be sent to the peace conference. The representative should present to the conference the matter of losses and damages incurred by the evacuees as the result of evacuation. There is no question that matters vitally concerning us will be discussed at the peace conference, and it will be valuable for us ~~to~~ have someone representing our interests. Of course, that's not in the record."

Katow believed that the Poston delegates had done creditable work at Salt Lake City. Except on a few occasions, they were united and worked harmoniously. In Katow's appraisal, Okamoto was the worst member. Sometimes he refused to act in accordance with the previous arrangements which had been agreed among them. On other occasions, he argued in the extreme presenting such contentions as those that would be advanced likely by the irrational, irresponsible Issei. "Okamoto was no good. He has no head. As usual, he tried to bring out 'the Japanese Government' to strengthen his arguments. With him, it's always the Spanish Consul or the Japanese Government. On several occasions we were embarrassed by him. Besides, he heckled from the floor when other delegates were speaking. I heard him say more than several times, 'Shut up,' or 'That's enough. You have spoken more than five minutes'. He is a regular yaji (irresponsible heckler)."

Katow thought that the delegates from Heart Mountain showed a shameful lack of unity among them. It appeared to him as if

of the five delegates from Heart Mountain represented each of as many different warring factions in the center. He noticed that the Heart Mountain delegation was the most disorganized group; they presented divergent views at the same time and quarrelled among them on the floor. On one occasion, Hachimonji made a certain statement and alleged that it was the opinion of the residents of Heart Mountain. The other delegates, however, challenged the authenticity of the statement and insisted that he should make a correction that it was merely an opinion of his own and not of the residents of the center. After heated debate Hachimonji apologized to the body.

Cohesion and unity were evident among the members of <sup>the</sup> Gila delegation, those of the Granada delegation, and those of the Rohwer delegation. The Rohwer delegation was the most organized and unified group. Both Shingu and Fujino from Rohwer were very capable; Fujino was considered as the chief of the delegates from Rohwer. He acted very dignified; he let the two younger delegates do the actual work, while he remained "behind the scene" and counseled them.

Katow concluded his informal conference with Nishimoto by stressing the importance of forming a group at Poston to study the real deterrents of the residents for relocation. He emphasized the necessity of compiling the statistical data through the interviews initiated by evacuee leaders. He deplored the present condition where the leaders were indifferent with the relocation problems of the Poston residents.

On March 1, 1945, from 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon, a

special meeting of the Community Council was held in its office to hear reports on the conference from the four delegates. To this meeting the evacuee leaders in the administrative positions were invited as special guests. Those present as guests were Unit Administrator Sumida, Unit II Administrator Uyeno, Unit III Administrator Yoshimine, Unit I Supervisor of Block Manager Nishimoto, Unit III Supervisor of Block Manager Nishi, and Unit III Assistant Supervisor Uyeki. G. Iseda, the Chairman, presided over the meeting.

First, ~~the~~ mimeographed copies of the conference resolution addressed to Director Myer, both in English and Japanese, were distributed. By the request of those present, Iseda decreed that the copies in Japanese be used for discussion at this time. Nobuo Matsubara, the Secretary attached to the delegation, read the resolution in Japanese word by word. As Katow had warned, there were discrepancies between the Japanese original and its English translation. It is significant to remember that the English version was presented to Director Myer, and the Japanese version was read to the members of the Community Council. Below, the two versions are printed side by side for comparison.

#### English Version

#### Japanese Version

February 24, 1945

Mr. Dillon S. Myer,  
National Director  
War Relocation Authority  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Myer:

We of Japanese ancestry residing within these United States feel that the people of this country,

generally, have accepted us on the strength of our record as law-abiding residents during the past fifty and more years. We have engaged in farming, commerce, fishing industry, etc., as operators and laborers, and so had established solid foundations in this country.

The outbreak of hostilities between the United States and Japan in 1941, was followed, in 1942, by the War Department's order that all of us who resided within the west coast area, inclusive of American citizens as well as Japanese nationals, be forcibly evacuated. We suffered extreme shock and mental anguish, as well as substantial material losses. The foundations we had created by years of toil were almost completely wiped away. We have existed these past almost three years within the confines of barbed wire fences, within camps located in desert wilderness.

On December 17, 1944, the Western Defense Command announced the rescinding of the exclusion order. At the same time the War Relocation Authority announced that all our camps would be closed by not later than January 2, 1946.

Surveys of general opinion among center residents as a result of the foregoing dual announcements disclosed the fact that due to their present economic status, their fear of violence and discrimination on the outside, etc., the majority were not in a position to make plans either for relocation or for return to their former homes on the west coast, under present conditions and under currently available facilities and assistance provided by the WRA and other agencies.

As a natural consequence, this, the All Center Conference, was decided upon. Delegates representing seven

. . . The foundations, the results of hardships and toil for the past half century, were completely uprooted from the bottom. We have existed with perseverance almost three years . . .

relocation centers met from February 16 to February 24, 1945, at Salt Lake City. After serious deliberation, mindful of our grave responsibility to do our utmost for the best welfare of 75,000 people, we now make the fervent appeal that the WRA centers be kept open for the duration of war and for some time thereafter as may be needed and, further, be operated with a view to providing residents with necessities, facilities and services on at least on equal level as in the past.

. . . for the duration and until such time thereafter when they can relocate freely . . .

We, hereinafter **submit** a statement of facts and recommendations with the request that you will accord them your full and sympathetic consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Masaru Narahara  
Masaru Narahara, Chairman  
ALL CENTER CONFERENCE

approved:

/s/ H. Nishimura  
Delegate for Gila Project

/s/ S. Kawashiri  
Delegate for Granada Project

/s/ G. Mihara  
Delegate for Minidoka Project

/s/ M. Hayashida  
Delegate for Heart Mountain Project

/s/ G. Katow  
Delegate for Poston Project

/s/ C. Fujino  
Delegate for Rohwer Project

/s/ I. Sugiyama  
Delegate for Topaz Project

Copy: Harold Ickes,  
Secretary of Interior

STATEMENT OF FACTS

1. Mental suffering has been caused by the forced mass evacuation.
2. There has been an almost complete destruction of financial foundations built during over half a century.
3. Especially for the duration, the war had created fears of prejudices, persecution, etc., also fears of physical violence and fears of damage to property.
4. Many Isseis (average age is between 60 and 65) were depending upon their sons for assistance and support, but these sons are serving in the United States Armed Forces. Now these Isseis are reluctant to consider relocation.
5. Residents feel insecure and apprehensive towards the many changes and modification of W. R. A. policies.
6. The residents have prepared to remain for the duration because of many statements made by the W. H. A., that relocation centers will be maintained for the duration of the war.
7. Many residents were forced to dispose of their personal and real properties, business and agricultural equipment, etc., at a mere trifle of their cost; also drew leases for the "duration", hence have nothing to return to.
8. Practically every Buddhist priest is now excluded from the West Coast. Buddhism has a substantial following, and the mem-

There has been a complete destruction . . .

The Issei are well on in years and their sons are serving in the armed forces and there ~~is~~ no one to support their families. The insecurity of livelihood due to these facts.

Because of the statement in the pamphlet distributed under the name of Mr. Eisenhower (line 29, page 8), "It is required to enlist in the work corp of the relocation center for the duration and fourteen days," the evacuees have lived with the understanding.

Practically every Buddhist priest is now excluded from the West Coast. The Buddhists cannot obtain the

bers obviously prefer to remain where the religion centers.

9. There is an acute shortage of housing, which is obviously a basic need in resettlement. The residents fear that adequate housing is not available.

10. Many persons of Japanese ancestry have difficulty in obtaining insurance coverage on life, against fire, on automobiles, on property, etc.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend:

1. That special governmental agencies or units be established solely for providing assistance to evacuee who might require funds in reestablishing themselves.

- a. Resettlement aid (grants).
- b. Loans.

2. That the present relocation grant be increased. It should be given to every relocatee. The penalty clause on the present form should be deleted.

3. We further recommend that federal aid be granted according to every individual's particular needs until such time as he is reestablished.

3. That long term loans at a low

services of the priests when they return to the coast. There is no complete freedom of religion.

The WRA has no concrete plan for solution of the housing situation, which is most vital to relocation. The fear of housing situation due to the fact that evacuees alone must solve the problem.

#### DEMANDS

. . . We request that these agencies be maintained for a reasonable time after the closing of the centers.

That the present relocation grant be increased. It should be given to every person irrespective of the amount of fund in his possession. . . . We further demand . . .

That the W. R. A. use their

rate of interest be made available, without security, to aid the residents in reestablishing themselves as near as possible to their former status in private enterprises, such as business, agriculture, fisheries, etc.

4. That the W.R.A. use their good offices so that consideration may be given on priority by O.P.A. Because of evacuation, residents were forced to dispose of their equipment, trucks, cars and etc., many of which at present require the approval of an O.P.A. Board. These equipments are essential to many residents in order to reestablish themselves in former enterprises.
5. That the W.R.A. make every effort to obtain a return of property, for evacuees who, due to evacuation and consequent inability to maintain installment payments, have lost the same; further, in order to prevent loss of property, to obtain some definite arrangement for the granting of governmental aid, as may be necessary, to evacuees unable, as a result of evacuation, to maintain installment payments.
6. That the W.R.A. give financial aid to residents with definite plans, for the purposes of defraying the expenses of investigating specific relocation possibilities.

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The evacuees have lost the real property purchased on installment plan at the time of evacuation due to the lapse of payments. We demand that aid be given to the efforts to reestablish the right to the property which has been lost.

That the W.R.A. give financial aid to residents leaving on short term leaves with definite plans, for the purpose of defraying expenses of investigating specific relocation possibilities.

That the W.R.A. establish branch offices in important areas and employ persons of Japanese ancestry in order to aid relocatees. In these field offices, legal department and employment division should be established.

7. That the W.R.A. establish adequate staffed offices in important areas and employ persons of Japanese ancestry since they understand Japanese psychology; and also establish in these field offices, legal and employment departments.
8. That the W.R.A. continue the operation of evacuee property offices for the duration to fulfill the needs of relocatees.
9. That the W.R.A. accept for reinduction into centers those who relocate and who find themselves unable to make satisfactory adjustments.
10. That the W.R.A. arrange for the establishing of hostels and other facilities in various areas; and furthermore, build new housing through the F.H.A. with W.R.A. assistance.
11. That the W.R.A. provide transportation of evacuee property door to door.
12. That the W.R.A. negotiate for the establishing of old people's homes exclusively for persons of Japanese ancestry.
13. That the W.R.A. make negotiation to arrange (1) so that evacuees formerly civil service employees will be reinstated and (2) so

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That the W.R.A. provide transportation of evacuee property door to door.

We demand that relocatees after their return or relocation be guaranteed of their livelihood by the Soldiers' family assistance system, the unemployment insurance, or the relief fund for the people dislocated by the war, which has been established by the Congress, until such time as they can reestablish themselves firmly.

that persons of Japanese ancestry will be able to secure business licenses as formerly.

14. That short term leave regulations be changed to permit an absence of two months with one month extension privileges. Also, that the evacuee investigating relocation possibilities be permitted to become employed without change of status.
15. That when an evacuee relocates or returns to his former business or home, W.R.A. should make every effort to release frozen assets (blocked accounts) both in cases of individuals or organizations.
16. That the W.R.A. negotiate for the concluding of arrangements where under alien parents may be able to operate or manage properties with powers of attorney issued by their children, particularly by sons in the United States Armed Forces.
17. That the W.R.A. arrange to secure outright releases for parolees who relocate.
18. That the W.R.A. obtain the establishment of some avenue of governmental indemnities for relocatees who may become victims of anti-Japanese violence in terms of personal injuries or property damage.
19. That the W.R.A. arrange for adequate government compensation against losses to evacuee property by fire, theft, etc. while in government or private storage or while in transit.
20. That the W.R.A. arrange to provide students of Japanese ancestry with adequate protection in case of need, and opportunities equal to those enjoyed

We demand proper restitution for the losses to evacuee property by fire, theft, etc., intentionally or accidentally, while in W.R.A. or government storage or while in transit.

by Caucasian students.

21. That the W.R.A. make every effort to secure work opportunities for returnees and relocatees on equal basis with Caucasian citizens, particularly in reference to admittance into labor unions.

#### SUGGESTION

The foregoing is a partial list of appeals emanating from center residents, and each item is founded on factual cases. We make the suggestion that the W.R.A. should verify the existence of these problems, possibly by adopting some such procedure as follows:

The W.R.A. should conduct a more accurate and intensive relocation survey than at present, with intent to determine what are the actual needs of the residents, in terms of making their relocation possible. This Survey might be conducted in every project, by interviewing a number of evacuees selected from among those unable to make relocation plans, and further selected with a view to obtaining an accurate cross-section (Occupations, location of former homes, etc.) The assistance of interpreters recommended by the Community Councils might be enlisted.

Note: The suggested survey should, perhaps, be conducted so that all center residents will be interviewed; however, as a first step, we recommend the interview of lesser numbers, in the interests of expediency, because we desire the earliest possible acknowledgement of the conditions, and establishment of adequate policies for the furthering of relocation.

However, the Japanese version, in addition, included the following resolutions passed in the conference:

#### RESOLUTIONS

##### No. 1 Resolution Regarding Coordination Among The Centers

We resolve to coordinate our activities constantly among our centers and to exchange information on the trends of people in the various centers for the purpose of fulfilling the aims of this conference. If deemed necessary, a second conference may be called.

Note: The headquarters shall be established at the Topaz Relocation Center. In case the second conference is to be called, the various centers shall exchange their respective proposals and agenda in advance among them in order to facilitate the discussions of the matters during the conference.

February 22, 1945

All Center Conference

##### No. 2 Resolution to The Manzanar Center

In the name of the All Center Conference, the following resolution was unanimously passed so that it be submitted to the Block Managers Assembly at Manzanar:

We believe essential to have all the relocation centers keep in step and move forward in order to fulfill the aims of this conference. Therefore, in the name of this conference we resolve to report to the Manzanar residents, who did not participate in this conference, the policies and resolutions decided by us in order to carry out the aims. At the same time, we recommend that they agree with the purpose of this conference and that they hereafter participate in the conference in order to keep in step.

February 22, 1945

All Center Conference

## RECOMMENDATION

Having attended the All Center Conference, we have observed that the Community Councils or the Special Study Committees had earnestly been studying the problems arising from the closing of the centers and the problems for relocations for a considerable length of time. We, therefore, recommend that such a Special Study Committee be established to investigate and study constantly these problems, which are vital to all the residents at Poston, in order to fulfill their wishes.

February 25, 1945

The Poston Delegates to the All  
Center Conference

When Nobuo Matsubara finished ~~the~~ reading of these pages of the resolutions and recommendations passed in the conference, City Manager Minoru Okamoto commenced to give his verbal report briefly. He explained the ~~via~~ five reasons as given by Myer that the centers should be closed this year. During the question-answer session with Myer, Okamoto reported, the Director was asked what he would do with those still remaining in the relocation centers <sup>on the closing day.</sup> Myer replied that he did not expect any evacuee left on the last day; he believed that no one wanted to remain in the centers and <sup>every one</sup> would leave before the deadline. Okamoto believed that the WRA would go out of existence after this year, but he could not conceive that every evacuee would leave the center. He thought that Myer would realize the impracticability of the present closure policy by the end of this summer and would decide to resign from his office. "He didn't say so, but he hinted that," Okamoto stated.

To the question whether the delegates received any answer to the requests of the conference, Okamoto believed that

the document had not reached Director Myer yet. He explained in detail as to how much time had been consumed at the conference in deciding which request should be included in the final document, because the delegates of a center naturally wanted to have their proposals incorporated. For another reason, there was a considerable debate among the delegates as to the advisability of presenting the resolution to Director Myer during the conference. Many of them were afraid that Myer would be able to answer all the requests before the body without hesitation and that <sup>all</sup> his answers would be ~~all~~ unfavorable to the evacuees. In the end, they decided to present the document after the meeting with Myer so that he would be compelled to reply in writing after the delegates returned to their respective centers. "If Myer replied the requests one after another at the conference and gave unfavorable answers, which were more than likely, we wouldn't be able to return to the centers and face the residents," Okamoto confessed. "Besides, we weren't quite ready with the formulation of our demands when we were scheduled to meet Myer. We thought it would be better that Myer answered the resolutions by writing to the various centers. But Myer will be getting the paper today or tomorrow. He is visiting Gila now. By the time he comes here and speaks to the community, he will have all the answers. I am afraid that he will cover every point in it when he speaks to the people here."

Okamoto then went on to explain that many organizations sympathetic to ~~the~~ evacuees had been invited to attend the conference, but only a few of them were able to do so due to lack of time. There were, however, Okamoto reported, several import-

ant organizations present. Among them ~~A~~<sup>a</sup> Jewish and <sup>a</sup> Negro delegates were conspicuous and very sympathetic to the problems of ~~the~~ evacuees. In Okamoto's opinion, Judge Wolfe of the Utah Supreme Court was the most significant guest; he understood the various complicated problems of ~~the~~ evacuees and appreciated their plight. "He had very good knowlege of the Japanese problems," Okamoto reported. "He was our real friend. In the morning, Judge Wolfe stated that he thought something could be done with the Congress so that the centers be maintained for many of us who want to remain. He seemed to be a friend of Mr. Myer. They went out for lunch together, and came back after more than one hour. In the afternoon, Judge changed his mind slightly and said that it was best for ~~the~~ evacuees to relocate as soon as possible. Myer must have told him something during the lunch hour. Judge said that he sympathized with Myer's position; he said he was having hard time placed between the Congress and the evacuees. He said that he understood the difficult position the delegates were in; the delegates were sandwiched between the WRA and the evacuees, he said. He believed that the delegates should encourage the relocation program when they returned to the centers. He told us to help Mr. Myer, because he had our interests at heart and ~~was~~ fighting for us against all kinds of odds."

Okamoto concluded his report by saying that he believed Myer had some alternative plan when it became obvious that the present closure policy would fail. Myer hinted that he had some plan to increase the present relocation grants and to improve the present assistance. However, he refused to reveal

the plan for the obvious reason that it might be obstructed if it were known to the Congress or to the general public too far in advance.

Following Okamoto<sup>o</sup>, Y. Katow gave his verbal report. He emphasized as usual that the facts present by the various delegations had been studied and the requests had been devised from the study. The study of these facts revealed that the residents now remaining in the centers could be divided into the three groups, viz., those who would relocate in the near future, those who wished to relocate, but could not<sup>do</sup> so with the present provisions given by the WRA because of their economic conditions, and those who could not relocate at all due to physical or financial reasons. The people who belonged to the second class constituted the vast majority of the present population, Katow reported; the number of persons belonging to the third class was found to be very small. Katow believed that those who now claimed that they would not or could not relocate would do so if they were given more and better assistance by the WRA. "I know that many people are saying now that they wouldn't budge. But I believe they will leave the centers if they received something by which they can reestablish themselves on the outside. With most of them it's a question of better financial aid. But Mr. Myer made it clear that he would not give everyone more money. He said that if he gave \$300, we would ask for \$500. Then if we succeeded in getting \$500 per person, we would be asking for \$1,000 next time. He said that it would not be good for us to get more money. He said he was willing to give money to any individual if he could prove to ~~his~~<sup>the</sup> satisfaction

of the WRA that he needed the money justifiably in order to reestablish himself on the outside. This, however, must be decided on the merits of the individual case. Myer made it clear that he was against the general hand outs of money to evacuees."

Delegate Katow was of the opinion that Myer had other plans to assist rehabilitation of evacuees and to facilitate the eventual closing of the centers. As for example, Katow claimed, the Director inferred during an informal discussion that he had some drastic plans to solve the housing difficulties of relocatees, but he refused to reveal the nature of these plans. (Some weeks afterwards, Corlies Carter intimated that such drastic plans were being schemed in the WRA office at Washington. Infra., p. ) In the formal meeting, however, Myer insisted that the WRA would not assume the responsibility of "house hunting" for the relocatees. As Katow put it, Director Myer insisted that the burden of solving the housing problem rested with the relocatees. "The way Mr. Myer said it was this way. He said that the WRA doesn't know what kind of house a relocatee needs. One relocatee may want a house with two rooms for the monthly rental of, say, thirty dollars, while a next relocatee may want a house with five rooms. Again one relocatee may want to live in one section of a town, while another relocatee may not be satisfied with the location of the house. He said that each relocatee should look for his own house himself. The WRA cannot be expected to handle such an enormous task. He agreed that the housing problem is tough, but he was sure that it could be solved if the relocatees tried hard enough."

Katow touched upon the five reasons that Myer had advanced for the closing of the centers. "I believe that Mr. Myer really thinks it will be for the best interests of the Japanese that the centers be closed. He is really fighting for the future of our people. So he will push this program with everything he's got. He told us that he has no plan at all for the people who will be left in the centers at the time those centers will close. He was emphatic in saying that he did not expect any evacuee remaining in the centers on January 2, 1946."

At this point, Minory Okamoto, who was sitting next to Katow at the speakers' table, interjected, "Mr. Myer said that he did not ask the Congress for the budget to run the centers beyond this year. He told us that the WRA did not have money to operate these centers after January 2."

"Yes, that's what he said," Katow continued with his report. "He insisted that there will be no more WRA after this year. But at one point he dropped a hint that he realized there would be some people left in the centers after this year. In spite of his confident speech, I believe he knows that every one cannot relocate within this year. I am sure that he has some plan for these remaining people, although he will not admit it right now. (Nobuo Matsubara, too, corroborated this conjecture in an interview with Nishimoto.) One thing I'm sure though. That is, there will be no more WRA. I don't know whether Mr. Myer will resign this summer or not. But some change will be made about this summer. This is one of the most valuable fruits of this conference."

In contrast with Okamoto's contention that he was certain

that Dillon Myer would resign before the WRA could change its policies, Katow was of the opinion that the WRA could modify its course without Myer's resignation. "In the informal meeting, Myer mentioned that he would have to resign if the present policies failed. But I doubt it. Without resigning, Myer can modify the WRA policies so that they would be more realistic and more adoptable to the condition that there would be many thousand people left in the centers."

Katow then narrated the difficulty of the Agenda Committee, on which he served as a member, in formulating the final resolution. For example, the residents of Poston in general were concerned with the maintenance of the centers for the duration and the delegates had been instructed to propose this request, Katow explained. In the same manner, the delegates from Gila argued in the conference that the resolution should aim at only one point, exclusive of all others --- the maintenance of the centers in the status quo. The Gila delegates were adamant in insisting that it was not <sup>to</sup> include any requests or conditions by which the evacuees would leave the centers. "They said that they came to the conference to fight the WRA policy of closing the centers. They stated that they were not interested in anything else but that."

According to Katow, the delegates from Topaz, too, proposed similarly that the resolution should cover only the opposition to the WRA policy of center closure. The Topaz delegates, however, argued from a slightly different reasoning. One of the Topaz delegates explained that the resolution should be planned in two steps --- the first resolution should ask only

for the maintenance of the centers for the duration and a reasonable time thereafter; and when the first resolution ~~was~~ rejected, a second resolution should be sent to the WRA asking for the various conditions for relocation as they had been embodied in the platforms of the various centers. In the end, however, an agreement was reached whereby a resolution was passed asking for the maintenance of the centers stating the "facts" why the evacuees could not leave the centers, and attaching the various conditions of assistance and guarantee for relocation. "It means that we cannot relocate under the present circumstances, but if these conditions were granted, we will leave the centers."

on  
Katow went <sup>on</sup> to report that in all probability the present resolution would be rejected by ~~by~~ the WRA. "I don't believe that the WRA will give us those conditions of assistance and guarantee," Katow commented. "But we presented the resolution to the WRA anyway. It was our contention that the first resolution should be presented to our direct superior, that is, the WRA. When the WRA rejects it, we have a right to appeal to a higher authority. So, as our next step, we will present our second resolution to the Secretary of the Interior. It is going to be worded stronger than the first one. When that fails, we are going to appeal direct to the President. It's going to be worded much, much stronger than the first paper. We have planned the fight way into the future."

Delegate Katow then reported on the formation of the permanent All Center organization, which would coordinate activities among the centers to promote the welfare and to safeguard the interests of the evacuees. He again mentioned the

hope of these delegates for participation in the peace conference. He also emphasized the necessity of conducting a survey, initiated and operated by the evacuee leaders, in order to determine the difficulties and problems confronting individuals for leaving the center. "I was really ashamed that we had not prepared for this conference. Conferences are going to be called in the future, so we should be prepared. We can't do anything without facts and data."

On question<sup>in</sup>g, Katow replied that the Spanish Consul was not invited to the conference. He explained that the question at issue was solely between the WRA and the Evacuees, and did not concern at this stage neither the Japanese Government nor the Spanish Government, its Protecting Power. He added that there were several Nisei among the delegates, and it was agreed that they should not be embarrassed by being compelled to discuss the subject with the Spanish representative. As Katow put it, it was not time to draw the Spanish representative in the issue; such time would come in the future, when the final appeal to the Presidnet was rejected. In preparation for such an eventuality, Katow pointed out, it was agreed that the copies of the minutes and the resolution be sent to the Spanish Embassy unofficially. The transmittal of the copies to the Spanish authorities was not recorded in the minutes of the conference.

At this point, the reports by the delegates were declared concluded. Chairman G. Iseda thought that there was nothing to be done<sup>✓</sup> except distributing the mimeographed copies of the resolution to the community. He pointed out that they could

only wait for Myer's reply.

Okamoto, however, stated that the residents would hear answers to all the points in the resolution when Myer visited Poston in a few days. "This is the last center he is visiting. He has practiced his speech all he wants by this time. He is an eloquent speaker. I think he will rattle off answers to all the points. We can't help that. But we want his answers in writing; and that's important in order to move to our next step."

The general reactions of those present in the meeting of the Community Council were mild and sympathetic. One of them stated:

"We are thankful of the efforts of you delegates. We know that your task was very difficult. You have, indeed, acted nobly and acquitted yourselves well. We, the residents of Poston, are grateful to your endeavors."

Another member of the Community Council commented:

"We are fighting the WRA right into their face. We are trying to force the WRA to do something directly opposite of what they have planned. On top of that, you had to face Myer. It is tough to fight Myer. He is suave and elusive. I believe the job was well done."

Another Issei in the audience stated:

"People as a whole do not expect a successful result from the beginning. This is about the best we have expected."

Sumida, the Unit I Administrator, said:

"It was a good thing that these delegates from the different centers got together and discussed the common problem. It is always important to find out about the people in other centers. In that sense, this conference was meaningful and significant."

Chairman Iseda added:

"It is a foregone conclusion that Myer will say 'no' to all of them. It's no use to ask Myer. We must go over his

head."

Then, he added:

"There was a request, as I remember, that the delegates report on the conference from the Block 4 stage. (Supra, p. ) I don't think we need to have such a gathering. What do you think?"

Okamoto replied that such a meeting should be dispensed with, because Myer within a few days would cover the same ground as he had done in the conference. In such a public meeting, Okamoto reasoned, the information as given before the Community Council could not be revealed. Aside from the "inside story", there was very little to report until Myer's formal replies were received. As Okamoto put it, the fruits of the conference had been embodied in the resolution, and its mimeographed copies were being prepared in order to be distributed to the blocks.

Supervisor Nishimoto, however, pointed out that some caution should be exercised to inform the community that the resolution was not the end by itself. The permanent organization resulting from the conference "will begin the work from there. When the copies are distributed to the blocks, I am sure that people will ask, 'What did Myer say to these?' ~~The~~ Publicity should be handled adroitly so that they will know that this is just the beginning."

They agreed that some means should be worked out by the Community Council to inform the residents as to what had been accomplished in the conference and what were to be expected in the future. With this arrangement, Iseda presented for discussion the program of Myer's visit and the strategy of meeting with the Director. (Infra, pp - ) The meeting of

of the Community Council was adjourned at 4:00 P. M., after two hours and half of discussions and reporting.

The delegates were obviously uncomfortable and defensive about their accomplishment at the conference. Their attitudes were gauged from the following bits of informal conversation they had after the session with various individuals. Okamoto, for instance, was heard telling one of his friends, "You can't expect everything in the way you want. We are bucking up against something big this time."

Katow told another Issei, "We tried the best we could. It was a very difficult job. We are just beginning. And we must get together and keep on fighting. I feel that my job is from now."

Kubota was heard saying in one corner of the room, "I don't know if this will satisfy people. I hope they didn't expect too much from this conference."

To Kubota's remark, James Takashima interjected, "Hell! If they don't like it, I will give them back the money (the travelling expense defrayed by the Community Council). What do they expect anyway?"

Supervisor Nishimoto realized that the residents would not be satisfied with the distributed copies of the resolution; he saw the importance of disseminating more detailed information on the accomplishment of the conference, because Myer had not replied to the resolution and because the public meeting as planned previously had been dispensed with. He was convinced that the people should be told of the difficulties which the

delegates had faced in the conference and the plans for the future which they had worked out. The community had learned of the return of these four representatives and was anxiously awaiting the report on the conference. Nishimoto was apprehensive of the lack of understanding of the community on the part of the members of the Community Council. As he told it to one of the Block Managers, they believed that there was no need of these delegates reporting to the residents. "They think they are big shots. They have heard the reports, and are satisfied now. They think that's the end of it. They don't realize that the community will start clamoring to find out what happened at the conference. The people will begin to shout why they aren't told of what happened. They will accuse the delegates and condemn them for failure to report. All kinds of rumors will fly around discrediting these men."

In line with his reasoning, Nishimoto called for an emergency meeting of the Block Managers of Unit I on the afternoon of March 2. On the face of the stand of the Community Council that no public meeting be held, the Supervisor planned to inform the community through the Block Managers. The Unit I delegates --- Katow and Okamoto --- and Secretary Matsubara were invited, and they in turn gladly accepted the invitation. This meeting, however, turned <sup>out</sup> to be bombastic and chaotic; it became unexpectedly significant and far reaching in its consequence. It brought out the dormant schism between these three individuals, and clarified <sup>fi</sup> where each of them stood. In this meeting, Okamoto revealed a complete change of his conviction and came all out for relocation and the WRA policies. Only two mon-

the previously, same Okamoto was reported to have had a heated quarrel with Itaru Kubota, the then Chairman of the Community Council, over the question of relocation. Having heard that Kubota was planning to return to his former home in Fresno, Okamoto accused him of unduly cooperating with the WRA and thereby jeopardizing the "welfare" of the evacuees, who could not leave the center. He was reported to have said in the end (quoted by Unit Administrator Sumida, who was present in the room at the time), "You are a sap falling for the lines fed by the WRA. The center isn't going to close. Guys like you are spoiling the chance of these people in the center. You are the Chairman of the Community Council. It is your duty to remain in the center and fight for getting what these people want. Instead, what do you do? You plan to relocate at the first chance before these people know what this policy of the WRA is all about. Hell! Get the hell out of here, if you want. We have no use for a guy like you."

This same Okamoto appeared often in the capacity of the Chairman of the Unit I Local Council or the City Manager before the public and in ~~the~~ meetings and declared that the center should not be closed. He accused the WRA of causing unnecessary human sufferings by "pushing everyone out of the center." It was this Okamoto, who wanted to appeal to the Spanish Consul so that the WRA reverse its stand of closing the centers. It is especially significant to note that Okamoto's original political strength had been drawn from the people who believed in the ultimate Japanese victory. In the light of his previous conviction, rumors pertaining to a change of his conviction,

which were heard in limited circles a day or two prior to his trip to Salt Lake City and after his return, were meaningful and indicative of what might happen with other leaders. These rumors reported that Okamoto had been in argument with his fellow block residents or had quarrelled with his Go playmates over the outlook of the war in the Pacific. His friends had been fired by Okamoto's contention that Japan would lose the war and her end would come within this year. As one of the rumors put it, Okamoto believed that Japan would capitulate before this September.

On the heel of these rumors reporting the change of his estimate on the war, Okamoto committed for the first time in public, before the Block Managers, that he favored the WRA policies for closing the centers. The City Manager let it known that he reversed his stand and irrevocably committed all out for relocation. "What the Hell are you guys doing in dump like this? You shouldn't stay here. You should get the hell out of here." These statements made by Okamoto unexpectedly out of the clear sky caused consternation among the audience; and on these statements the later events surrounding Okamoto developed.

This meeting of the Block Managers was held from 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon in the Unit Conference Room. As the notices specified that the delegates would be present, the interest of the Managers was high; they gathered well in advance of the appointed time and there was no absentee. Supervisor Nishimoto presided, and opened the meeting with a brief statement that the delegates had returned from the All Center Conference with successful accomplishments. He reminded<sup>d</sup> the body that the task was

difficult, but the outcome was better than what had been expected. He then passed copies of the Salt Lake resolution among the Managers, and asked them to read them.

After an interval of several minutes, Katow explained the difficulties which the delegates had faced in formulating the resolution. He again related the various arguments advanced by the delegates of different centers whether the stand against the center closure should come first and foremost or whether only the various conditions of assistance and guarantee should be treated <sup>as</sup> more important. Katow then went on to explain in detail the permanent organization established as a result of this conference.

After Katow, Okamoto reported on Myer's five points for closing the centers. "Mr. Myer will do everything in his power to close the centers at the end of this year," Okamoto stated with a tone of conviction. "He will probably do something in the meanwhile to help out those people who need more help. But he is dead set on the closing policy."

The City Manager recounted the open session with the representatives of the various organizations sympathetic with evacuees. He again related the statements made by Judge Wolfe.

One of the Managers then asked whether there was any answers to the resolution when Myer spoke before the body. Okamoto explained why the delegates decided to present the resolution after Myer's speech, <sup>describing</sup> ~~giving~~ the same inside planning as he had told the Community Council. "Mr. Myer is coming next week, and he will cover all these points. He is a good speaker, and I won't be surprised ~~that~~ if he gave very good answers to

them."

At this point, Supervisor Nishimoto announced that Myer would be here on March 6 and 7, and gave the date and time of Myer's speech before the residents from the Block 4 outdoor stage and of his meeting with the community leaders in the Elementary School Auditorium. He added, "You have heard the reports from the delegates, and before we go into 'question and answer', I want to say just a few things." With this opening, he reminded the Managers that he had warned them often not to expect too much ~~from~~ the conference. He repeated the same grounds as he had ~~repeated~~ argued in the Managers' meetings before the conference. "As I see it, there are still some people who think the delegates are all mighty and can change a governmental policy by their say so. It is your job to straighten these people. I am asking you to take the reports of these delegates back to your/blocks and inform your block people. There should be no dissension to the contention that our delegates have done their job well, and I want you to tell the people so."

After Nishimoto instructed the Managers how the residents should be handled and what they should be informed of, he allowed the Managers to ask questions. The first question came from the Manager of one of the blocks occupied by Orange County evacuees. (Perhaps he is a repatriate.) "I understand well as to what you have done for those people who are to remain in this country after the war. We are thankful for what you have done. But I would like to know what you have done for people like us. We have no desire to remain in this country after the war. We have given up any ~~hope~~ <sup>desire</sup> of staying in this country. We

are only thinking of going back to Japan. The sooner, the better it is. Have you done anything for us at the conference?"

"No," replied Katow. "We did not discuss the problems of those people who had applied for expatriation or repatriation. The WRA wants them to leave the center just like anyone else, unless they are on the Army stop list. So, their problems become same as those of the rest." (John Burling, the special representative of Attorney General Biddle attached to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior Chapman, who visited Poston in the latter part of March, 1945, contested the legality of this particular phase of the WRA post-exclusion program. *Infra*, p. 4)

Katow, nevertheless, added cryptically, "Your problem should be simple. You have made up your mind. There shouldn't be any worry."

The inquiring Manager, however, continued, "That means the conference was no value to us. The WRA is telling us to get out of here and await exchange ships on the outside. I don't think that is right."

"I don't believe that discussion of those people was our job . . ." Katow probably wanted to say that the conference had been held for the purpose of solving the problems of the people who wanted to remain in the United States after the war. He had intimated that the conference adopted the stand that the remaining evacuees in the centers wanted to relocate, but could not do so unless they were provided with better propositions. Supervisor Nishimoto, however, feared that the discussion might lead into ~~a~~ futile arguments, and stopped it by saying, "The pro-

blems of expatriates and repatriates are special problems affecting a small segment of the population. They do not affect the residents as a whole. The expatriates and repatriates can take the matter up directly with the WRA."

As Nishimoto asked for more questions, another Manager queried, "How were the delegates from other centers?"

"We have pledged not to mention the names of centers, when we are called on to make these reports," Katow replied. "But there were several centers who presented their points aggressively. There were at least three centers, which argued that the resolution to Myer should ask only the maintenance of the centers in the status quo." Then he continued to say how other centers had been well prepared as the result of surveys and interviews that they had conducted before coming to the conference, and emphasized the importance of conducting a similar survey at Poston in order to ascertain "the real difficulties of people for relocation". He stressed the point that no representative could champion the cause of people without knowing their real conditions.

At this point, Okamoto mentioned the fact that the delegates from Rohwer and Granada appeared as if they supported the post-exclusion program of the WRA. They were in favor of cooperating with the WRA program, and argued that evacuees should endeavor to relocate while the WRA was providing the facilities to assist relocation. In Okamoto's opinion, for Myer had visited these two centers prior to the conference, the delegates had been "indoctrinated" and were very sympathetic to the WRA.

Then, Nishimoto asked the delegates to discuss their out-

look for the immediate future. Here Okamoto commenced to give the unexpected, dynamic speech. "The WRA will close the centers by January 2, 1946. There is no question that it will carry out its program as they announced. You are talking about ganbaru and staying here until the last day of the center. I don't know how many of those people will be here until the last day. They may be saying to ganbaru today, but they may relocate tomorrow. That's happening everyday. You can't depend on what they are saying now. You are opposing the center closure policy of the WRA, because the WRA announced its decision to close the centers. Let us assume that the WRA announced that you can't go out of the centers at all. You will complain and complain in that case. You will say that you want to leave the centers, but you are being detained unlawfully. That's exactly the way you will behave."

"What the hell are you guys doing in a dump like this," Okamoto continued with increased vigor and zest. The audience was completely taken by a surprise; they did not expect such a speech from Okamoto. "You shouldn't stay here. You should get the hell out of here. The sooner you get out, the better it is for you. The center will become a very unpleasant place; it will become unbearable for you. In this place only old people will be left behind; people who are seventy years old and eighty years old. Even if the WRA <sup>tells</sup> ~~told~~ you to remain here, you will not want to stay. You will try to get out as soon as possible. Such a day is coming. You might as well awaken to the reality. And you should plan to relocate immediately. This is the best time to relocate. The WRA is mobilizing every

facility to help us. There are plenty of jobs. If we want to work on the outside, we can choose any kind of job we want. The economic condition of the country is most favorable to relocation of our people. If we waited until the end of the war, it will be too late. There will be many unemployed people --- think of so many million soldiers coming back from the war; they will be looking for jobs, too. As I see it, depression is sure to come after the war. And this depression will be much worse than the last one. At that time, you will not know what to do, even if you wanted to earn your living."

"This center is no place to raise our children." Okamoto's shrill voice was ringing in the room filled with the deadly silent audience. "They should go to schools on the outside. We hear so much about the kids getting bad. They will become worse if they stay here."

"Many people tell me that they want to return to Japan and want to wait until the end of the war in the center. I don't know how many of them really believe in that. I believe they are small in number. Most of them are just saying it, because they want to stay here and live easily without doing anything. You are opposing relocation. The trouble with you is that you don't have money; you are poor. At least, fifty percent of you are without adequate fund and don't know what to do. You ~~were~~ ~~are~~ barely getting by before the war started. If you don't have money, you should go out of the center and should earn money. This is the best chance. If you don't now, you will be out of money always."

"They tell me that racial discrimination is severe on

the outside." Okamoto seemed to be enchanted with his own speech. "The war is going on now. And what can you expect? A certain amount of discrimination should be expected. But during my trip this time I found that things aren't so bad. As a whole, my trip was pleasant, although I had two unpleasant experiences. Both at Ogden; when I was waiting for ~~the~~ bus to Idaho."

The City Manager then narrated the two incidents. He wanted, he stated, to drink beer and went in a place, where he was told to get out as he informed the bar tender that he was Japanese. He tried another place about one block away. Here again he was asked what nationality he was. As he replied that he was Japanese, the boy shooked his head signifying that he could not serve him. "I started to argue with this boy. I told him that it was all the same, because I was paying him money. I questioned him whether my money was any different from others' money. Then a big husky guy came out of the back room and told me to get hell out of the place. He looked like the boss of the place; he was tough and used cuss words. But the rest of the trip was nice. I had a good time in Las Vegas. I got to be friendly with many Caucasians and gambled with the machines with them. On the bus trip back, I made quite many friends with Caucasians. You people talk about race discrimination, but we had that before the war, too. I worked for a wholesale produce house in Los Angeles, and I had to travel extensively up and down California. Many times I was refused of hotel accommodations. I went in restaurants, and I was told that they would not serve <sup>me</sup>. There was a time when I sat in a restaurant in one of the towns in California for more than ten minutes, but no one paid any attention to me and I had

to get out. That was before the war. And we expected those things then. I can't see why we can't take it now. They won't kill you."

As Okamoto paused for a moment, Katow began to speak as if he did not want the City Manager to continue with his speech. (Katow told Nishimoto afterwards that he was afraid Okamoto's opinion might be regarded as that of the Poston delegates. He did not want to give his personal point of view, but he was compelled to do so in order to clarify that Okamoto was speaking for himself and not for <sup>the</sup> others.) "Mr. Okamoto sounds like a WRA official. I doubt very much if it is wise for the Issei to relocate now. I met many Issei during this trip and during the last trip to Chicago. And I found out that they were not happy on the outside. When I went to Chicago on a Co-op's business, I stopped at Boulder on my way back. (the Navy language school at the University of Colorado, where many Japanese are hired as language instructors.) Many Issei, whom I knew well before evacuation, are teaching there. As soon as they saw me, they said, 'We are no worse than the Japanese in the relocation centers.'" They said that before I had a chance to say anything. I surmised that they were very much on the defensive. It showed that their conscience <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ bothering them. They didn't have to defend what they were doing like that. (In the past, many Japanese accused these Issei instructors of betraying Japan. It has been contended that teaching the naval officers who would use the benefits of the instruction ~~against~~ <sup>for</sup> the destruction of Japan is not a proper act for any Issei who is loyal to Japan. Some of the extremists <sup>have</sup> argued that their act

<sup>is</sup>  
~~was~~ that of traitors. Katow was pointing out the fact that the Issei instructors were aware of the criticism.

The argument advanced by the Issei, whom Katow met during his trip, was obviously that the evacuees now remaining in the relocation centers were loyal to the United States, and as a corollary disloyal to Japan, by virtue of answering the loyalty questions in the affirmative. It has often <sup>been</sup> stated by such people that if the Japanese were as loyal to Japan as they would like to claim, they would have gone to Tule Lake.)

Katow went on to say that the Issei whom he met on the outside were bothered with the same dilemma. "They seemed to be worried about the fact that they were working on the outside. Many of them regarded it as helping the war efforts of the United States, and wondered if that was a right thing for them to do while they remained as Japanese nationals. Some of them were worried what <sup>would</sup> ~~happen~~ to them after the war when they return to Japan. They were thinking whether they would not be punished in Japan for what they were doing during the war."

"These people are working hard. They are getting by as far as earning their livelihood is concerned. But I don't believe that they are satisfied with what they are doing. They are always conscious of themselves; the realization that they are Japanese is constantly on their minds. They are afraid to talk about the war. Life for them is not free like we are here. It is not a natural life; they can't say what they think. They are bothered with oppressed feeling."

"But the WRA will push its program to close the centers," Katow spoke with more strength in his voice. "We must decide

now what we want to do in the future. We must decide whether or not we want to work for America. Once that is decided, people can go out of the center if they are given more money. The whole thing is the matter for each individual to decide. I don't encourage relocation, because it is not pleasant on the outside. I will not say that everybody should leave the center. That is not right to say that." (Katow clarified the last statements afterwards when Nishimoto asked him what he meant. He tried to convey to the audience with these intentionally ambiguous statements that time would come for the Japanese people to decide between the two courses open to them, viz., all out affiliation with the United States or irrevocable tie with Japan. He meant to say that the people could no longer "sit on the fence". He believed that those who had forsaken the United States should not leave the center. Okamoto made a mistake in telling that every one should relocate for his own good, he thought. In his opinion, no one should persuade the people to relocate; the decision should be made by the people themselves. They should judge for themselves based on "facts" that should be presented by leaders.)

Nobuo Matsubara had been sitting in his chair uncomfortably. When Katow reached the last word, he began to speak impassionedly, as if he could not wait any longer in silence. "All these things can be decided by the conviction of each individual. It is up to what the individual believes in. Every one should know<sup>to</sup><sub>1</sub> which country he is loyal. That's fundamental. If he is a man enough, he should know that."

Matsubara became more excited and his voice became louder. "Mr. Okamoto is wrong in advising everyone to relocate. Those who believe themselves loyal to Japan ought not to relocate. They should remain in the center. What does it matter if the WRA closes the center? There is the center at Santa Fe. There is Crystal City. It's entirely up to you. If you are really determined to return to Japan, there should not be any worry. There are places to go to for those people. The whole trouble began when we answered 'yes-yes' to the questions 27 and 28. The mistakes have been made by ourselves. Not the WRA. Because we have declared ourselves loyal to the United States by answering those questions in the affirmative, the WRA has classified us as those not desiring to return to Japan. That's natural. Nothing wrong with the WRA. How can we say now that we don't want to leave the center, because we don't wish to remain in the United States after the war? Why haven't we declared so when we have been called on to decide? The persons who wish to declare themselves loyal to Japan can make such declaration; it is not too late."

"On the other hand, those people who have decided to remain in the United States ought to relocate. If they are loyal to the United States, they ought to go out and contribute to the war efforts. It's up to each individual. No one ought to push anyone out of the center. I can't understand Mr. Okamoto's point of view that we should not remain in the center. Let us decide that, instead."

Matsubara, too, urged each resident to make his own choice, avoiding adroitly, however, to reveal <sup>for</sup> which side he stood. Ni-

shimoto became aware that arguments would ensue endlessly; he noticed that the people in the audience were tense. He could not fail to observe that they resented Okamoto's remarks --- Okamoto had made tactical errors of speaking out that everyone should "get the hell" out of the center, that the center life was unwholesome, that they were poor and did not know what to do, inferring that they lacked ability and fortitude, and that so called loyal-to-Japan people were not really so. The Supervisor immediately took the situation in ~~his~~ hand; he proposed a resolution appreciating and thanking the efforts of these delegates at the conference in behalf of the Poston residents. Without a second to the motion, he asked for passage of the resolution with clappings of hands. On the request of the Supervisor, the Block Managers obediently passed the resolution with a thunderous ovation. The meeting was adjourned immediately afterwards.

The reaction of the Managers on the meeting was surprisingly uniform --- their expressions were focused on Okamoto's speech and invariably negative. One of the Managers approached the Supervisor and stated, "Good thing that you have stopped the discussion. We would have told a few things to Okamoto if we had a chance."

"What happened to that guy?" another Manager commented. "He has swallowed Dillon Myer."

"Okamoto is cocky," another Manager was visibly angry. "Look at his attitude. Who the hell <sup>does</sup> he think we are anyway?"

"How much is Okamoto getting from the WRA?" was a sarcastic remark from still another Manager.

"He is supposed to be the City Manager --- a leader of the residents. How can that guy tell us to relocate with a straight face? He should quit the job."

Unit Administrator Sumida, who attended the meeting, was more to the point. "Okamoto has been talking against relocation. He has told people not to be fooled by what the WRA ~~were~~<sup>was</sup> saying. That was because he was a repatriate and was on the Army stop list. Now that he has been cleared by the Army, he is telling that everyone ought to leave the center. If you look back his past record, you will notice that his activities here, which are supposedly for the good of people, have been centered around his self. He is ~~the~~ kind of a fellow who wants to drag others along if he must go to hell. He is very selfish."

Delegate Katow commented on Okamoto's speech thus:

"I was surprised when Okamoto started to say those things. I don't know what to do with him. I don't know what he actually believes. He says one thing one time, and another thing at another time. I wonder whether he had any conviction of his own. He repeated what Myer had told us at the conference.

"We, the delegates, had been elected by the people to fight the policy of center closure. There is no question that we had been instructed by the people on that platform. Now we have come back, and Okamoto starts telling the people to get out of the center. To me, it doesn't make a sense. If that's what he believes, he should not have gone to the conference as a delegate of the people. It is same as fooling our own people."

Matsubara was still angry long afterwards. He stated in a derisive tone, "Fool! (Baka yaro) There is no medicine to cure a fool."

The resentful reaction against Okamoto could not remain within the limited circle of the Block Managers. It became known later that Okamoto's first committal in public favoring

relocation permeated into the community, as the Managers reported to the residents on the conference. According to the instruction, the Managers tacked the mimeographed copies of the Salt Lake resolution on the walls of Mess Halls and on the block bulletin boards. In addition, many of them gave ~~a~~ Brief summaries of what they had heard from the delegates during the meeting to their block residents at meal times. These verbal reports varied greatly with the respective Managers, but they emphasized that an answer to the resolution had not been received from Director Myer. Some of them stressed the point that a permanent organization for the Japanese was born from this conference. As a whole, the Managers focused their emphasis on the positive efforts of the conference so that criticisms against the delegates might be diverted. However, while chatting with residents informally, many Managers, it became evident later, mentioned the fact that Okamoto had made an unexpected speech, using discourteous words, in favor of relocation. These Managers did not forget to add their own comments on the speech, unfavorable to Okamoto --- similar to those that were heard after the meeting.

As a consequence of these unfavorable reactions, several attempts, albeit unofficial, were made by some of the leaders to warn Okamoto. As for an example, Manager Matsutani of Block 30, where the City Manager resided, came to the Executive Board in the morning of March 3, the next day after the Block Managers' meeting, appealing to its Chairman, Y. Katow, to warn Okamoto that he should not talk of the Japanese defeat this year and should not propagandize relocation. The Manager reported that <sup>near</sup> a first fight ~~almost~~ climaxed a little discussion the night before

when Okamoto discussed the war and relocation with an influential resident of the block. In the opinion of the Manager, Okamoto was unduly irritating residents who were already worried about the turn of the war and the prospect of the center closing. He believed that no leader should disturb his followers when it could be avoided. Katow, however, refused to accede to the Manager's request contending that he could not interfere with Okamoto for expressing his personal opinions.

<sup>P</sup> Supervisor Nishimoto, too, received a request of the sort from another Manager, who stated that his block residents wished "someone do something about it." The Supervisor, like Katow, refused to interfere with the City Manager. Nevertheless, the dissatisfaction over Okamoto's beliefs remained unabated; with some it was of a greater importance than the outcome of the conference, and they continued to talk of the City Manager <sup>con</sup> ~~contemp~~tuously.

As Okamoto was asked by <sup>P</sup> Supervisor Nishimoto in the morning of March 2 to give his report to the Managers, he realized the necessity of calling a special meeting of the Unit I Local Council, of which he was the Chairman. He had had no intention of assembling the Councilmen for the purpose of hearing the delegates report on the conference. However, on the face of the new development where the Supervisor called the special meeting, he could not remain idle. Notices were immediately dispatched to the members of the Council requesting them to assemble on the next day, March 3 (Saturday).

The special meeting of the Council was called from 10

o'clock in the conference room. In addition to Y. Katow, N. Matsubara, there were about thirty Councilmen present. First, Chairman Okamoto distributed mimeographed copies of the resolution, and asked them to read them. After several minutes, the Chairman commenced to give his verbal report on the meeting with Dillon Myer, much in the same manner as he had reported to the Block Managers. He mentioned Myer's five reasons for closing the centers, then the speech made by Judge Wolfe. He explained the reason behind the belated presentation of the resolution and the circumstance why an answer had not been received. He concluded his report with an announcement of the schedule during Myer's stay at Poston. "Mr. Myer will give eloquent answers to all the points in the document. He will be very convincing."

Then Katow followed with his report. Again he covered the same grounds which had been explained to the Managers the day previously. First, he related in detail the difficulty of deciding which of the two proposals was more important --- the requests of those who could not leave the centers or the various demands of those who wanted to relocate. He pointed out the sharp split on the issue among the delegates. Then Katow explained the organization established as a result of this conference and the aims which it was intending to accomplish, mentioning particularly its significance in connection with the "peace conference". The exposition on the necessity and the importance of conducting a survey initiated by evacuees in order to determine the real problems for relocation followed. The delegate concluded with the account that the various studies of other centers had revealed that the evacuee population can be

divided into three groups, naming and describing in detail these three groups.

There was a relaxed lull a little while. Some of the Councilmen commented that too much could not be expected in Myer's answer to the resolution. Some others expressed that a conference of this sort could not be expected to produce any better result. Their reaction should be described as an expected realization of unsatisfactory outcome and a complete resignation to the inevitable result. This atmosphere could best <sup>be</sup> explained by the statement of a Councilmen as he whispered it to another sitting next to him. "We knew from the beginning that the WRA won't budge. It couldn't be otherwise. I think they have done the best they could under the <sup>trying</sup> ~~trifling~~ conditions. It's from now that will decide the issue. If we don't leave the center, the WRA can't close the center. The whole thing depends on what we will do from now on."

Suddenly, Nagase of Block 18 (a parolee) stood up and addressed the delegates, "You have spoken of three groups. Tell us now which group each one of you delegates belongs?" (Many Councilmen believed that Nagase wanted to force Okamoto <sup>to</sup> reiterate his stand in favor of relocation. His intimate friend varified this belief afterwards that it was exactly the scheme he had intended. Nagase had heard from the Manager of his block that Okamoto made the "nasty" speech before the Managers, and became incensed.) It seemed that Okamoto believed the question was directly aimed at him for an unfriendly purpose. At any rate, the Chairman began to speak in an angry tone, visibly irritated. "There are people who are saying that they will stick it out here."

Those guys are saying that they will not budge even if they were plied with crowbars. You can't depend on what they say. You know that damn well, don't you? I don't have to tell you that there are a bunch of guys who say that they will not budge today, and tomorrow they will relocate as if they forgot what they have said. That's the way these people are. We fight the policy of closing of the center and spend our efforts to keep this place open. But while we are fighting, many people are leaving in droves. It's silly. As I have told the Managers, you should relocate. This place will become so unbearable and unpleasant that you won't want to stay." He repeated the speech which he had made to the Managers --- this time, however, with more vigor.

Again, as the day before, Matsubara impatiently contradicted Okamoto's contention. "It is for each individual to decide --- whether to relocate or whether to remain in the center. It is and must be decided depending on the true conviction of the individual. It is the question of with which of the two countries his conviction lies. What is <sup>it</sup> to some of these people if a worse depression visits America? The education of our children is a minor matter once we have decided to remain here for the duration. Suppose they can't go to school? So what?" Matsubara continued with his familiar speech with much force in an excited tone. He was shouting at the top of his voice, which rang throughout the crowded little room.

After Matsubara, Katow followed in a calmer, sarcastic tone. First, he crooked his head towards Okamoto, pointing his thumb, "Mr. Okamoto is very much for relocation . . ."

He went ahead to give the same speech that he had given to the Managers. When each of the three evacuees present at the conference had had his say, Okamoto declared that no good could be gained by arguing on the relocation issue, and began to discuss other matters on the agenda, particularly the matter of Myer's visit. While Mat<sup>S</sup>ubara and Katow spoke in opposition, the Chairman sat uneasily and his mannerism was haughty. The expressions on his face indicated that he was sneering at his colleagues. The Councilmen in the audience, too, were uncomfortable; they were aware of the tension as the result of revelation of the schism and the old feud between Okamoto on the one hand and Katow and Matsubara on the other hand. They seemed somewhat embarrassed of the situation, and relieved when a further development of unpleasantness was avoided by the Chairman's move to go on with the other business.

Thus, Minoru Okamoto "insulted" the Poston residents generally, and committed himself fully in accord with the new WRA post-exclusion program. Speaking in favor of relocation, however, he threw polite manner and tactful words to the wind; no one could ~~not~~ doubt that he held evacuees at Poston in contempt. His complete face-about in public caused a mild consternation among the evacuee leaders, and gave a tool to his enemies, which were legion, to discredit him. Indeed, many people were justifiably disgusted with Okamoto, for he had been sent to the conference as a trusted representative of the Poston residents, who desired to have the center maintained in the status quo. Okamoto, on the other hand, continued with similar talks; he told his point of view on the war and on the relocation program willingly

and unsolicitedly to other groups of evacuees, now that he had committed once for all in public. The resultant irritation on the part of listeners was not slight, and had repercussions for a long time afterwards. (Infra, p. )

Outside of the Councilmen and the Block Managers, who had heard the reports directly from the delegates, or other evacuees in ~~the~~ key positions, who had a good knowledge as to what had happened at the conference, the Poston residents failed to express their reactions or their opinions on the outcome of the All Center Conference or on the accomplishments of the delegates as freely or articulately as one would expect. *Comparatively* ~~only~~ few expressions were heard; many of the usually vocal people remained silent or talked only a little. It was very difficult to analyze the public opinion resulting from the conference and the reports about it; it might be described either as apathy or as complete satisfaction with the inevitable unfavorable outcome. Perhaps, both the descriptions were correct; with some elements apathy prevailed, while others were satisfied with the expected incomplete outcome. In order to explain this unusual (Unusual because a great amount of enthusiasm was evident for formulating the "demands" and for the general election) condition, the following five reasons might be advanced as the major factors:

1. The slow progress of relocation since the announcement of closing of the centers. (Infra. pp. )

The residents had expected that many people would leave the center in droves, and the center would become noticeably thinly populated. This had been their secret fear in spite of their

articulate opinions that people could not leave and would not leave the center. The Administration, too, avoided active campaigning for the post-exclusion program in the early months for fear that it would create obstructive movements and obstinate resistance to relocation among the evacuees. Because of the combination of these developments, the residents had once again been becoming complacent in the belief that it was well nigh impossible to close the center within this year, or for that matter quite a long time thereafter. This belief had been increasing, and the increase was especially noticeable during the latter part of February. It is understandable that they <sup>had</sup> supported the conference from their own accord or in response to the propaganda, for its purpose was agreeable with what they wished.

2. Through the Poston Chronicle and from other sources, the residents became aware of the fact that Director Dillon Myer would be at Poston on March 6 and 7, which were less than one week away. They have a great respect and admiration for Myer --- some of them regard him as "the savior of the Japanese-Americans". Myer's visit and his appearance before a general public, the first time in the Poston history, diverted their attention from the return of the delegates. Some of them wishfully thought that something favorable to them might be announced by Myer. (Infra, pp.

)

3. In advance of the conference, they had been told the difficulty of attaining the goal requested by them. They had been warned not to expect a favorable outcome. Many of them knew and realized the difficulty without being told.

4. The evacuee leaders and others in the key positions

realized that the results of the conference were difficult to present to the people and were not concrete and simple as one might wish. They were, therefore, sympathetic to the returning delegates, and most of them actively interpreted the results *favorably* *in* their limited spheres.

5. As amply described previously, much of the potential dissatisfaction, although in restricted circles, was diverted into attacks on and criticisms against Minoru Okamoto for his new stand, which an evacuee characterized as "selling his *friends* down the river treacherously."

and other  
For these <sup>^</sup> reasons, the articulate expressions were scant in number. Nonetheless, there were enough variations --- varying from expressions of the pessimistic future to those signifying their sense of satisfaction with the accomplishments. Only, the usual vocal, <sup>o</sup>irrational expressions and belligerent opinions were lacking. <sup>Had</sup> ~~Should~~ one wished to ~~expressed~~ a violent resentment to the delegation as a unit, he did so in whisper calmly or in a modulated, well mannered tone.

As to the lack of expressions reflecting on the conference, it was not difficult to expect that the Nisei were found in the extreme position. Very few opinions were heard from them, and the Nisei in general were indifferent to the progress or the <sup>out-</sup>come of the conference. Many of them were understandably ignorant of the developments, for after all the information and the reports were dispensed <sup>being</sup> <sup>^</sup> aimed particularly to the Issei. However, some interesting remarks were heard from the Nisei, generally antagonistic of the Issei. For instance, a Nisei girl of about twenty years of age, <sup>the</sup> <sup>^</sup> secretary in one of the administrative

offices, stated:

"I thought this /conference/ was for all of us. I don't know what happened. They don't tell us about it. Yes, they report in Japanese, but that's no good for us, because they use difficult Japanese words."

A Nisei boy of eighteen from a rural area in Central California said:

"A Caucasian asked me about the conference, but I couldn't tell him what happened. What did they do anyway?"

Another Nisei young man, probably twenty-five years of age, expressed thus:

"This is the same old Issei politics. They are cooking up <sup>things</sup> among themselves, and the rest of us don't know what it's all about."

A Hawaii-born Nisei in his early thirties was resentful of the fact that the matter of the All Center Conference was largely confined among the Issei and a small number of the Kibei. This Nisei had "leased" extensively for Japanese tenants in Orange County before Pearl Harbor, and was now holding a key position in the Relocation Division. He wrote in his letter to a friend of his in another center that the conference was a matter which interested <sup>only</sup> the Issei and some Kibei. Others were not at all interested in the conference, which, in his opinion, could not be any more significant than idle talks, ~~which were~~ argued only among the "big shots". He could not see that the conference would accomplish any tangible purpose. (This Nisei had been regarded as Inu in the early days here, and had been discredited. This statement is an exaggeration of the actual situation. However, it reflects well the attitude of some of the Nisei, whose ambition to be one of the leaders had been frustrated.)

Somewhat more objective than the Hawaii-born Nisei, a

young evacuee from Los Angeles said:

"I believe they are asking too many things. Some of their requests are reasonable, but others are entirely out of ~~the~~ line. I think they can't get them."

This Nisei obviously had read the Salt Lake resolution.

A Nisei girl of about twenty years old, formerly of Orange County, had probably heard about the requests made by the delegates at Salt Lake City.

"I know something about what they asked. Do you thing we will get them?"

Among the Kibei, a dichotomy existed --- apathy on the one hand and antipathy on the other hand. The younger groups of the Kibei were generally indifferent or ignorant, while the older groups varied in their antipathetic attitudes from skepticism to an accusation of corruption. Few favorable expressions were heard among the Kibei.

A Kibei truck driver, probably eighteen years old, remarked:

"That's ~~an~~ Issei politics. I don't pay any attention."

Another Kibei of about twenty, working in the garage, said:

"Hell. I'm ticketed to jail. (He is one of the draft evaders, and expected to be tried soon.) I don't give a damn."

A Kibei, formerly of Los Angeles, about thirty years of age, said:

"I don't think <sup>anything</sup> ~~nothing~~ will come out of this conference. It will end just as a lot of talks. It's hard to believe that the WRA will concede those requests."

A Kibei evacuee from Orange County, about thirty-three years old, who had at one time served as a member of the Local Council, remarked:

"It's the same pattern every time with these Issei. Something happens, and they oppose. They hold a conference, and pass a resolution opposing everything. After a while, they

will forget what they have said. I will bet this will be the end <sup>of</sup> the opposition to the closing of the center. The Issei don't have the spirit to go on with it to the end."

Another Kibei of about the same age commented:

"What did they do? Practically nothing. Yes, they passed the resolution. But what is it? It is the same thing as the Poston resolution. And Myer will say to these demands 'no', and the whole thing will be over. It is a foolish thing."

A Kibei, who had <sup>the</sup> charge of a number of the warehouses, expressed his disgust:

"They spent our money and got nothing out of it. Maybe they drank whiskey with it."

Several Kibei expressed their opinions on the results of the conference, which was similar to the prevalent attitude among the Issei. In substance, they said that it was agreeable with them that such a conference <sup>had been</sup> ~~was~~ held to discuss the common problems of the evacuees in the various centers, but the closing of the centers was an impossible venture, which the WRA would realize sooner or later. Some of them argued <sup>it</sup> ~~on~~ the shortage of housing on the outside, while some others pointed out the numerous incidents of violence in California.

The attitudes and opinions among the Issei on the outcome of the All Center Conference varied more widely than among the Kibei. On the pessimistic side, an Issei, an urban evacuee of about fifty years of age, commented:

"It was known from the beginning that there was no point to holding this kind of conference. It was clear that nothing could be gained from it. When the Government says that it is going to do this or that, it will go ahead with it whether we like it nor not. We should better avoid a useless, foolish thing like that."

Another Issei, also from Los Angeles, remarked quietly, shak-

ing his head, said in ~~an~~ understone:

"After all, it wasn't any good. They wasted our money."

A young Issei, a former business man in Little Tokyo in Los Angeles, stated placidly:

"In the end, the center won't be such a pleasant place to stay. People will start leaving <sup>ing</sup> the center in droves this summer in spite of what they may be saying now. Although the conference asked the WRA to keep the center open, such a stand won't be practical. I am not interested in this sort of protest movement, although I do believe that there are many people who cannot leave the center. There are ways to take care of those people. I am leaving the center about this May. I have to look ~~about~~ for myself and my family before I worry about others."

In this statement, the young Issei business man expressed an important attitude, which had noticeably <sup>been</sup> increasing in the recent weeks, i. e., ". . . I am leaving the center. . . . I have to look out for myself and my family before I worry about others." Others had been heard saying the same sort of opinion --- an indication of the trend moving from ~~the~~ communal responsibility to individualistic thinking and behaviors.

There was another Issei, a rural evacuee of about fifty-five years of age, was also pessimistic about the prospect of the WRA yielding to the requests of the conference, although he was submissively resigned to such a fate.

"I think the WRA won't give in. They will just go ahead to close the center. We can't help it. It's no fault of the delegates. I guess I better be thinking about what I should do."

The majority of the Issei (and many Kibei, too, as described above) were hopeful of the future; they believed that the WRA would modify its policy of center closure before the deadline. There were many Issei who were certain of their belief that the center could not be closed; while many other Issei expressed the

same attitude, although they might not be quite certain. This attitude influenced their expressions on the results of the conference; some of the representative expressions, which were legion, are recorded below:

"If we stay here and refuse to leave, the WRA cannot do anything about this closing business. Up to now, only a small number of people have relocated, and the rate of relocation cannot increase much more. At this rate, we don't need to worry; there will be a plenty of people left behind. With so many people remaining in the center, the WRA cannot close the center. This conference served the purpose of telling the WRA that that is what is going to happen."

"You can't expect the WRA to say so easily, 'We've changed our minds ~~meaning~~ <sup>about</sup> the policy of closing.' It is a difficult job for the leaders, and it will take a lot of time. But there is a plenty of chance for making the WRA to change its policy. Our fight is from now."

"This is our first step. Now that the conference has been held, the WRA understands that we can't relocate even though we want to try."

"The results of the conference are not significant. It doesn't matter so much. The real purpose is to let the WRA what we are thinking. After all, by telling the WRA that we can't leave the center its purpose was achieved."

"We must tell the WRA step by step that we can't leave the center. They can't close it anyway, but we must <sup>fall</sup> them in advance."

There were other Issei who commented on several other phases of the conference. As for example, an Issei from Imperial Valley had this to say:

"If we can send our delegate to the peace conference, it will be very good."

Another Issei was appreciative of what the conference had accomplished:

"It was a very good thing that the delegates from all centers had gotten together and exchanged information. It is always important for all of us to get together and do

everything together. We should depend on these delegates."

As usual, there were several Issei who spoke of the delegates contemptuously, although <sup>neither</sup> ~~not~~ violently <sup>nor</sup> ~~or~~ pugnaciously.

"Those guys must have had a good time outside."

"They must have had good things to eat."

Somewhat more cynical than the average Issei, an elderly man commented:

"I bet they will leave Poston quicker than others. That's the reason that they have asked for more money and so on. They want more money to leave. As far as we are concerned, we want the center be kept open, as we said from the beginning."

However, as the news of Director Myer's coming became known to the community, the residents awaited his arrival anxiously. Their interested anticipation diverted much of their attention from the delegates and their reports. "I hear Myer is coming" was heard all over in the camp during the first week in March. With some of the ~~more~~ simpler people, their anticipation for Myer's visit appeared very much like hero worship. They said, in substance, "I hear he is going to speak to us," as though that was a great honor to them. It was, indeed, a sharp contrast with the cynicism of the evacuee leaders, who said, "There isn't any use listening to Myer, for we know what he will say."

An elderly Issei, probably a small scale farmer before Pearl Harbor, remarked wishfully:

"Maybe Myer will tell us that we can stay here for the duration."

And he was not the only person who held such a hope.