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Unofficial report of the First General Assembly of Topaz --- F. Hoshiyama.
Meeting held Sept. 11, 1942, at Recreation Hall, 7:30 pm, in Block 3

(meeting called and arranged by Community Activities Committee)

Chairman of meeting: Dr. Carl Hirota

Invocation by Rev. T. Goto opened the first assembly meeting to which the entire staff of the administration were invited. Everyone of the staff members including the head nurse attended the meeting. All the newly arrived residents of Topaz attended which numbered over 200 persons.

Pledge of Allegiance led by George Suzuki, Singing of "God Bless America" led by Goro Suzuki, and greetings and few words of explanatory nature were made by chairman Carl Hirota.

Mr. Hirota then introduced Center Director, Chas. Ernst, and after few introductory remarks of welcome and saying that the place is still in the hands of the Army Engineers, he offered to 'try' to answer any questions that we wished to ask. He had his whole staff there and asked them to help him.

Question: Will two families be put together in one room?

Answer: Strange families won't be put together, but it may be necessary to consider the 'in-laws' as part of one family. We have enough room when center is completed to house nearly 12,000 persons at maximum, but plans and actuality is not the same thing so we will have to wait.

Q: Why the secrecy about the relocation center and it's program?

A: Secrecy was not on the WRA side. It was at Tanforan, or the other side, meaning WCCA. In fact, we sure wished that we knew what time you were coming. We shall try to be open and put everything on the table with you. We must work together to make this center the best home possible.

Q: What projects and program has been planned for us at Topaz?

A: At the present moment, there aren't any definite program or plan. We plan to go as far as your ingenuity will allow. We want to do everything and much as we can. More specifically, I must tell you that this spot is a lake bottom. Parts of it are no good for growing anything, parts of it can be used for agriculture. We shall plan to do anything that is possible in agriculture, industry, and professionally. It's all up to us and your record proves that you are capable and willing. We will do all we can for you and that's why we are here. (Off the record--my informal discussion with you) Please note Mr. Ernst request that the following in quotes is off of the record. Ed.

"You're not in California now. You're in Utah and so are not surrounded by military authorities. My earnest hope and objective which is the theoretic and academic hope of the WRA is to depopulate these centers so that you people will find permanent residence ~~somewhere~~^{we} in the job and occupation you want or like. If/~~you~~^{we} can do this in time, and let you find your private life all over the country in places you can get along, and we find ourselves without anyone to take care of anymore, the WRA will consider that it has done an ideal job. These centers will be depopulated in time as opportunities present themselves.

Q: What is the ~~return~~ address and how do we mail letters?

A: U.S. Post Office Department have officially listed this place as Topaz, Utah and will have a postmaster and post office across the road as soon as the building is finished. Return address is: Topaz, Utah altho Delta, Utah, WRA Center will get here. Both address is safe. (Incidentally

the Block 15 which was designated as your temporary homes was the Army number and from this time on, the block 15 will be Block 3).

Readers, please note change--My address is, therefore, Block 3, 3-E.

Q. How is our food rationed, according to money value or poundage?

A. At present neither. We will guarantee as good food and in as much variety as what the Service men are getting in the army and that food is considered very adequate for health and growth. It's well balanced, contains plenty of vitamins and highly recommended by doctors. Sufficient milk for children is guaranteed and also for adults. We consider food fundamental and will make all effort to give you the best. Arrangements for pasteurized milk has been made and fresh milk will be delivered daily to center.

Q. Where can we purchase stamps.

A. Center store will have some on sale right away, and Walter Hondrich, Chief of Community Enterprises, will make other arrangements. Post Office will open soon.

Q. What is the attitude of the people of Utah towards WRA Center?

A. It's a tough question to answer in few words. On the whole, the attitude is friendly and sympathetic. Governor Maw sees you in a different light now that he understands what the WRA is trying to do. He asked to come and visit you, so if it's all right with you, we shall invite him later. Attorney General feels that we have something in Utah which you will like and that the Utah state will gain by your presence. So many of the people say, Oh, is that it, I didn't know that, I thought they were all spies. Once, they understand your situation and see your excellent attitude and skills at play, then they will have new respect and interest in you. In Utah, I may be wrong, but

there are between four to five thousand Japanese making a living and living right among the Caucasians competing with them and being patronized by them with respect. So, I think you'll find friendliness.

Q. Will the Tanforan people come here daily after the 15th?

A. As far as we know, the next group will arrive on the 17th and steadily up to the 23rd. Then a short lull, and then all should be here by Oct. 1st. Some are coming, those that overflowed Tanforan and went further south, from Santa Anita to here which will make Topaz close to 10,000.

Q. Will the place be ready for them when they come? Our latrines weren't ready when we arrived.

A. If you mean that will the hospitals be ready, I must say that it won't be ready for maximum efficiency. It'll be ready for service, but some cases might have to be taken to other more properly equipped place. The building will be ready, but that's not the whole story. We are having contractors work overtime and we are trying our best. We may have to wire back asking them to hold it a spell, but on the whole, we should be ready.

Q. Can we vote in Utah?

A. I don't know that answer. We have to wait and see what is decided.

Q. May we have visitors?

A. A qualified yes. Only if you say you want them. We won't let anybody visit you who you don't care to see. They can visit right into your homes.... It's your prerogative to say who and when.

Q. Rumors about lack of water were heard. Just what is the situation?

A. That's a real fundamental question and we won't fail you.

Adequate water for whole center is assured. We have two shallow wells, and one deep well 1,000 ft. and another deep well being dug. Water is being tested and it has floride and chloride in it and the pipes have been chlorided, so we don't put any cholr-ide in it. Doctor drinks it and I do so it must be good. Don't worry about water. You will have sufficient good water ~~to~~ supply for all. We won't fail you on that score.

Q. What about boundaries and curfews?

A. Who wants curfew anyway? If you want it we shall have it, but you will decide if you want it or not. Unless it's necessary and you decide that it's necessary, we shall have it. You tell us what you want and we shall try to oblige. If you want trees, you tell us, if you want wading pool, you tell us. We are here to serve you within our power and ability. It's your home and you decide how to run it. Boundaries are a little different matter. We have military police here who has the responsibility to see that everyone of us stays within the one mile square area of this center between sunset and sunrise. During the day, between sunrise and sunset, the residents who are working can have much freedom as they go to work on the 12,000 acres area. (Ed note: I mentioned it to be 60,000 acres before, but it is only 12,000 acres, which is large enough.) Then during the day the MPs patrol the 12,000 acres area. One can't just go wondering around without a foreman or some administrative officer. Same thing for going into Delta, the biggest town. For marriage license, one has to go to Delta. For special purposes, permission will be granted to leave camp.

Q. In other centers Cooperatives are operated. Can we operate coops here?

- A. Let's let Larry Collins who is here answer that. Larry: "Yes, you may have any kind of coop when you say you want them and the residents say they want it and are ready for it. In case you do have it, all the sales at our stores will issue receipts for every purchase. Cash or scrip can be decided upon by yourself."
- Q. What will we use for money to buy anything and will basic clothing be issued?
- A. That's something we haven't definitely decided, but will release information soon. Mr. Hughes, my assistant director is making a note of it so we shall take care of it. That's very important and that's the kind of question which is good and important. Clothing for workers (work clothes) will be issued, and for those who are willing and can't work because of no jobs, we shall have to make some arrangements for them. We are going to take pride in ourselves and see to it that there will be work for everyone. We shall try to be smart enough and ingenious enough to find something that you can all do well and give job to anyone who wants to work and is willing to work. That's our goal and we shall exert all effort in achieving it.

Chairman: Are there any other questions? It is getting late, and all of you are tired from the trip so shall we close this assembly now. In behalf of the residents, I wish to thank Mr. Ernst and his staff for coming to our meeting tonight and giving us the information we desired. Meeting adjourned 9:00 P.M.

Other comments:

All loose lumber was picked up by the carpenters and they are to be rationed off according to need of every family. No possibility of hoarding. I had a lots hoarded in my room, but they picked it all up. Mr. Baker, I don't know his official title, will have the carpenters make

necessary tables, shelves, benches, etc. for every room soon as the resident carpenters get here. We are only in temporary quarters now so it'll be no use making things and shelves.

Weather is grand today. It's very warm, but not hot. It's ideal.

Remember that from now on, Block 15 has been changed to Block 3. Block 15 won't be filled until much later.

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Any question which you wished to ask will be answered to best of our ability so if you are curious or have some questions, shoot them over. I'll try. I think it'll get colder and colder, so warm clothing will be essential. It's already cold at nights and early mornings. It reminds me of Livingston, Calif., my home town. I'll write again, but in the meantime, take care of yourself and we'll be seeing you soon. Hello to my friends.....Aloha,

Fred Hoshiyama

Note: It is not possible to cover all of the meetings in which the residents meet for purposes of self-governing so a report of the Self-government Activities and Community Council for Block #3 will be made only. Whenever other information is available, they shall be duly recorded.

Report of the first meeting of Block #3 under the sponsorship of the Community Council.

Meeting was held in the Dining Hall #3 of Block #3 and Mr. Vernon Ichisaka was the chairman. He was elected the Council man for this block from 11 total votes out of possible 200 voters. Meeting was slated for 7:00 pm. bulletin board announcements informed the public, but meeting didn't actually start until 7:50 pm after door to door call was made to ask the residents to attend the most important meeting.

The meeting was held for the following purposes: 1) To inform the public of the proceedings, decisions and actions taken by the temporary council which was elected within last two weeks. 2) To give information to the public regarding new regulations and rulings regarding Japanese literature, employment, housing, ~~xxxxxx~~ made by the temporary council at their two recent meetings. 3) To elect delegates to the Education Congress which will decide upon policies to determine about Board of Education, Parent-Teachers Association, and other important policy making bodies regarding the education of Topaz children and adults.

Attendance at time the meeting started was 23 persons with the following breakdown: 1) 6 Nisei citizens 2) 9 women with 2 nisie included, and others all issei men. At its most the attendance was 29 persons.

The chairman, Councilman Ichisaka opened the meeting with a few words of greetings in Japanese and then asked Mr. Honamai to read the minutes of the past Council meetings to the public in Japanese. The lights went dim due to overloading of the current and the fuse went out. So, Mr. Ichisaka read the minutes in English since the Japanese is harder to read. When the lights went back on to full power, Mr. Honami continued reading the minutes of the two meetings which took place during the week by the Temporary Community Council comprised of elected representative from each block. One of the meetings was the induction ceremony meeting and the other was a session with Mr. Myer Dillon S. Myer, Project Director of all the WRA Centers who operates from Washington, D. C.

After the minutes of the Council meetings were read, the chairman called for discussion regarding the education and housing conflict. Brief statement of the problem is that the school buildings have not been built at Topaz yet, and the living quarters, dining halls, rec. halls must be used for the schools if the schools are to start on schedule, Oct. 19th 1942, and it will be up to the residents to suggest what blocks can be given up for schools if they should feel that school will be important and the problem becomes acute because there is shortage of housing quarters right at present time.

No further discussion except the statement of the problem by the chairman was made and so nominations were called for to elect delegates to the Education Congress which will decide the question.

When nominations were called for the issei men began laughing

and some of the more outspoken members of the audience remarked that it would be impossible to elect anyone if they don't know the names of the people residing in the block or even at the particular meeting. If it was two or three months later, they would be able to know who are qualified to serve on different committees, but right now, the best means would be to have the Councilman and the Block Manager appoint a few persons to temporary serve as the representative to the Education Congress. The request for election called from one official delegate and three representatives to the Education Congress.

After some hesitation and few words of humorous remarks, one of the member of the audience suggested to submit a list of four names which was done by informal naming of persons at the meeting. This committee was to meet after the meeting and decide who will be the official delegate for the time being.

This was done and the following names were submitted:
Mr. Miyake, issei, Harry Taira, nisei, Mrs. Sato, issei, Nob Tabata, nisie (block manager).

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm

note: One important announcement which was made follows: Any Japanese printed material may be permitted in the WRA Centers if it has been passed by the express, freight, or parcel post channels. Any printed material approved in English in the center may be translated into Japanese and be posted on bulletin boards.