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Segregation

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COLORADO RIVER RELOCATION PROJECT

Poston, Arizona

Mr. Spicer

Community Analysis

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY
COMMUNITY ANALYSIS SECTION

Preliminary Report on Segregation Program

Note: The present report is intended to cover only the preliminary stages of the development of the segregation program.

Early steps were taken to inform the members of the administrative staff at Poston on the WRA plan for segregation, and to get information on the general objectives to the residents, even before the Project Director returned from the Denver meeting.

Moris Burge was acting director in the absence of the Project Director W. Wade Head. Advance copies of the manual had been received here and while it was realized that there were parts which were subject to interpretation by the director, and others which might be subject to change as a result of the Denver conference, key people on the administrative staff were given the over-all picture. This was followed by the statement of the objectives of the segregation made by the National Director at Denver.

With the arrival back in Poston of John Powell of the Community Activities division and Theodore Haas of the legal staff who had also attended the Denver meeting, on Friday night, arrangements were made for a general staff meeting. This meeting was held on Saturday. Here the policy and objectives of the segregation program were gone over. This was followed by a meeting of the members of the Community Council and block managers

representing the residents of all three units of Poston. Present at this meeting representing the administration were Moris Burge, as acting project director, John Powell and Theodore Haas.

Mr. Burge explained the WRA policy with regard to segregation pointing out that the administration was doing what a great many of the people in the relocation centers had long advocated, and that there would be no stigma attached to those who elected to go to the Tule Lake center. He pointed out also that there had been a basic general plan on which the program was to go forward and stressed that people who had not applied for repatriation or expatriation, would be given every opportunity for free expression of their own desires. Only the general plan was discussed because it was still felt that certain phases, particularly that relating to those who had answered "no" to the loyalty question, were subject to interpretation. A long period of questions and answers followed this general statement of policy in which questions raised by residents which could be answered from the basic policies laid down, were answered. Some questions raised were of a character which would require interpretation later, and this fact was brought out.

An article which had appeared in the Los Angeles Examiner purporting to be a quotation from the national director Dillon S. Myer, to the effect that all of the relocation centers excepting Tule Lake would be closed, had already caused anxieties among the residents. People generally had interpreted this to mean that after

the segregation was completed, those who remained in the relocation centers would be forced to relocate. They expected that a general order would be issued from the national office setting a date by which all residents would have to leave the centers, and that Poston as well as other relocation centers would be liquidated. Since the Los Angeles papers are widely read in Poston, this article was unfortunate. At the meeting of the members of the Council and block managers, Mr. Burge issued a flat denial of this news story and told the people present that there were no immediate plans for closing any of the relocation centers and that national policy was directed toward providing the relocation centers as long as they are needed for the protection of the people. Despite this statement the rumor that Poston was to be closed persisted and during the early stages of the segregation program it was very troublesome to the administrative staff.

One basic interpretation was required in the procedure outlined in the manual. This is set forth in the following letter:

COLORADO RIVER WAR RELOCATION PROJECT
POSTON, ARIZONA

August 9, 1943

MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. W. Wade Head
Project Director

FROM: Morris Burge
Assistant Project Director

This will cover the decisions reached by you and transmitted

to the Board of Review for Segregation and their hearings.

According to the instructions in the "Manual of Evacuee Transfer Operations", the Board is to review cases of "all persons who, at the time of the registration for Army service and war industries purposes answered Question 28 of Form WRA 126 (Revised) or DSS Form 304A in the negative, or failed or refused to answer it, and (a) who have not changed their answers prior to the date of this Instruction, and (b) who are in the opinion of the Project Director loyal to Japan".

This assumed that certain evacuees changed their answers to Question 28 prior to July 15, 1943. Since there were no instructions from Washington as to how such changes could be made, or under what conditions a request for change could be accepted, it is to be assumed that if an evacuee requested a change of answer, regardless of any judgment on the validity of such a change, he would come under this category. However, it has been your policy in Poston to accept no changes whatsoever to Question 28 pending the receipt of specific instructions from Washington. A number of evacuees who have requested that they be allowed to change their answers have been told that we were in no position to accept such an application. Since the Manual of Evacuee Transfer Operations assumed that the projects have accepted requests for changes, a hardship would be placed upon the residents of Poston because of a local policy.

The Board of Review for Segregation, therefore, has been instructed to place all evacuees who sincerely desire to change their answers to Question 28 in category 3 for further hearings under Administrative Instruction 22, Supplement 12. Furthermore, any evacuee who before the Board of Review for Segregation still maintains that his negative answer was correct and that he is either loyal to Japan or not loyal to United States will be placed in category 2 and recommended for segregation.

I would like to emphasize that this interpretation of the Manual of Evacuee Transfer Operations was necessitated by the failure of Washington to give the project any previous official instructions on the handling of changes to the loyalty question.

Moris Burge
Assistant Project Director

MB:ki
CC; Mr. Gelvin
Dr. Powell
Mr. Markley
Mr. Haas

With Mr. Head's arrival back at Poston immediate steps were taken to carry out the instructions on segregation. The list of repatriates was checked with the Washington list and members of the administrative staff were named to serve on the Board for Segregation Review. Those originally named were:

Ralph M. Gelvin, Associate Project Director
L. L. Nelson, Administrator, Unit I
James Crawford, Administrator, Unit II
Moris Burge, Administrator Unit III
T. Haas, Project Attorney
Giles L. Zimmerman, Chief Employment Division
John Powell, Acting Chief, Community Management
Ernest L. Miller, Chief Internal Security.

Two additional members were added two days later. They were:

Walter Balderston, Supervisor Community Activities
Dr. A. Fressman, Director Health and Sanitation.

At the same time Mr. Head asked for recommendations from the Council for observers from among the evacuee residents of all three units. These observers were to take no part in the interviews conducted by members of the Board for Segregation Review, but would be present. Thus, they would be able to report to the residents on the manner in which the interviews were conducted. On receipt of these recommendations, Mr. Head officially named as observers those who were selected by the representatives of the evacuees to serve in this capacity.

It is to be pointed out that the members of the Board for Segregation Review did not meet, in most instances, as a body for conducting the hearings. Actually, they worked in groups of two or

more and conducted the interviews on a more informal basis. Statements of those interviewed were documented and the members conducting the interviews then made recommendations to the Project Director on which he could base his final decision.

In order to forestall conflicting information or misstatements, Mr. Head issued a notice on the subject of information under date of August 6, which was as follows:

"Subject: Release of Information on Segregation.

"I feel that it is vital that during the next two months we avoid any confusion on the release of information on segregation to the evacuees and the staff. I am therefore, requesting that all releases on this subject be cleared through Moris Burge, and I will hold him responsible for the m. This will also include newspaper stories and editorials. I would appreciate your full cooperation in this matter as I feel it is of utmost importance for the functioning of the segregation program."

Wade Head
Project Director.

Moris Burge was placed directly in charge of the segregation program and headquarters for it was set up in a room in the main administration building in Unit I. An order was also issued giving the segregation office first priority on workers, material and transportation necessary to carry on its work.

Another staff meeting was called on Thursday morning at

which Mr. Head gave a report on the Denver meeting and the plans for carrying forward the tasks outlined in Administrative Instruction 100.

With the cooperation of the Office of Reports, working through the segregation office, a system of information control was set up consisting of official notices, releases etc., to the members of the staff and to the evacuees. The information contained in these releases, plus other matter intended to offset rumors, was prepared in news form for use in the project newspaper, The Chronicle. The official notices and releases were mimeographed and distributed through the blocks at all three units and posted on bulletin boards in the mess halls, in both English and Japanese.

There were two major handicaps to the information program.

- (a) Delay in receipt of the matter prepared by the Reports Division at Denver.
- (b) The general lack of confidence in and the poor quality of the project newspaper, The Chronicle.

Mr. Head took steps to arrange for the WRA to officially take back the newspaper from the co-operative for the period of the segregation. This measure was delayed, however, by the fact that there was an insufficient stock of paper on hand and other necessary materials. When it was to be put into effect it was planned to print a sufficient number of copies of The Chronicle to deliver to all family apartments in all three units, and to enlarge the paper where necessary to provide a wider news coverage and more space for official news. The situation with regard to

The Chronicle as a means of giving information to the people, was a serious one. The paper had deteriorated in quality since some of the more experienced people had left for relocation, and the work for the most part was being done by high school pupils. There was no centralized control of editorial policy, pages being made up and the mimeograph stencil prepared in the different units where the people worked independent of the editor. Thus, the paper had been in the past used by various persons for purposes of selfish interest and or as a means of perpetrating practical jokes, some of which were serious in character. The general attitude of the administrative heads of divisions was that The Chronicle was of no value and therefore, no news of value was given to the young reporters. The paper has, for all practical purposes, lost the respect of the staff and this was true to a great degree with the evacuee people.

Besides the rumor that Poston would be closed and that all of the people here would be forced to relocate, soon after the segregation was completed, there were other stories in circulation during the early stages of the program. One which was particularly bothersome right at the start was to the effect that Selective Service was to be applied to the people who stayed in the relocation centers and those on outside employment, but not to those who went to Tule Lake. To meet this situation a statement was prepared for Mr. Head by the legal department, and this was mimeographed and translated into Japanese and distributed through all blocks.

To indicate how this affected some of the people it is necessary only to relate that one of the translators in Unit I came to the office where the segregation information was handled and urged all speed in getting the bulletins delivered in Unit II where a number of people were then scheduled to come before the hearing board. "If we don't hurry we're going to lose some good men", he declared. These men, he said, wanted to show their loyalty to the United States but they didn't want to be inducted into the Army. They would go to Tule Lake if necessary to avoid Army service.

There were a number of other stories circulated. One was to the effect that there would be no more hogs purchased for the hog project at the center here and the animals there at that time would be all the meat the residents would be allowed. A very effective answer to this one came in a day or two when the project received some more pigs which had been previously ordered.

Another rumor took hold one afternoon and spread through the camp fast. It was that the Washington office of WRA was going to call off the whole segregation program because the Spanish consul had made a strong protest on the orders of the Japanese government.

There was also a report that the segregation center might be moved from Tule Lake. The rumor had it that the people at Tule Lake were protesting so bitterly against the program and against moving to other centers that some change would be made.

Again a rumor was circulated that the families at Tule Lake would not be kept together and that older children would be quartered in dormitories. We were able to make good use of the material sent by the Reports Officer at Tule Lake, John D. Cook, in combating this one. Actually it probably had its origin in the Army's plans for some of the internment centers.

The Granada project paper caused more trouble at Poston one day when copies arrived which contained a statement in the Japanese section to the effect that the centers where people were not being sent from Tule Lake, would be closed. While only a limited number of these papers came to Poston the story was told and retold in all three of the Units.

Early in the program the Project Director asked the Poston Community Council for recommendations of persons to serve on an advisory committee on segregation. These names were submitted and the committee was duly appointed by the Project Director. The committee met for organization and it was planned that a session would be held regularly each Wednesday morning with Mr. Burge present to represent the administration. Members of the committee made it known that they would be ready to meet with groups of evacuees at any time and to aid in straightening out individual matters.

Some few cases were reported where persons who had originally answered "yes" to the loyalty question wanted to change

their answers to "no". This matter was still pending at the time the final lists were being made up and it is likely that they will go to Tule Lake, if they persist in this attitude, but that they will not be included in the first group. They will later come up for hearing under Administrative Instruction 22.

Some cases were also reported where persons who had arrived in Poston later than the majority of residents stated that they had made application for repatriation to the Spanish consul. They had letters acknowledging receipt of their applications and the administration moved to accept this evidence of intent and previous application and their names were placed in Group One for segregation.

As the August 20th, deadline approaches for the final list of the first group of people to be moved to be made up, there are more and more questions being asked by the evacuees. This is to be expected, especially from those who know that they are to be moved. It does not represent a lack of information on the project, but rather the natural anxieties of the people.

Generally speaking, it may be said, that the program in its preliminary stages at least, has been going ahead smoothly and on schedule. There have been no general meetings of evacuees where segregation was the subject of the discussion and the administration has not encouraged such meetings. Representatives of the different evacuee groups have been told by the administration that every degree of fairness will be shown each individual within the bounds of the

rules prescribed by the WRA, and that the job would be done.

In the family welfare interviews with the people who were recommended for segregation by the Board of Review, a schedule of appointments was made up and people were very careful in keeping their appointments. All children over the age of 14 were advised to be present so that they might participate in the discussions as to whether they would accompany their parents to Tule Lake or what arrangements would be made in case they did not go to Tule Lake.

In a few instances there were reports received where a man and wife would be in disagreement over the loyalty question and one would be recommended for segregation while the other would not. These cases also presented a problem for the family welfare to work out.

Included in the first group to be moved to the Tule Lake center were:

Summary of Evacuees to be Segregated

Repatriates & Expatriates	501
Family Members (Repatriates & Expatriates)	102
Registration	334
Family Members (Registration)	521

TOTAL 1458

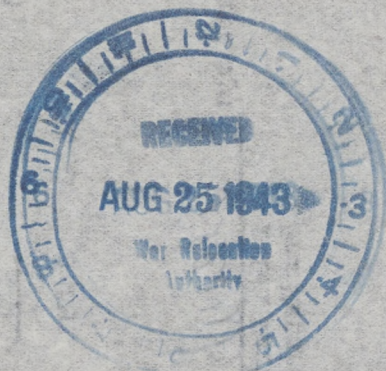
Prepared by:

Allen Markley
Allen Markley
Sr. Reports Officer

Approved by:

W. WADE HEAD

Project Director



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War Relocation
Authority