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Manzanar Relocation Center
Community Analysis Section
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FAMILY COUNSELING: THE EVACUEE VIEWPOINT

The War Relocation Authority has made or has tried to make its purpose in carrying out the Family Counseling Program clear and explicit. The bulk of the literature on the subject will reflect this official point of view, of course. Therefore, since the results of a program depend quite as much upon its interpretation and reinterpretation at the hands of those toward whom it is directed as it does upon stated purposes and goals, I thought it would be well if this section made an attempt to capture and document some of the opinions and reactions of the evacuees themselves in respect to family counseling. A more ambitious analysis of the family counseling and the interview material was planned, of which this paper was to be a part. My departure makes this impossible to carry out, however. So for what it is worth (and I think it does provide insight) we are submitting this report.

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When it was announced that family counseling would begin, the people were rather excited and were hostile to the idea. They wondered what they would be asked this time and when they would be called to be interviewed. In a certain block the block manager helped the interviewer by delivering slips of paper to the 4 families that were to be interviewed the next day. These papers were to be given to the work supervisors of those who were employed so that they would be excused for the interview and so that deductions would not be taken off the time sheet. It seems that this practice of giving the excuse slips has been abandoned. All the family members above the age of 15 had to attend the session. When anyone was absent, the interview was postponed. The family counseling is compulsory as far as we understand it. So far, I have heard of no one who said he would not be questioned. People attend as a matter of course, as a duty which must be performed.

The interpretation of the meaning of family counseling in some cases stimulates unpleasant feelings among the already apprehensive people. In certain blocks family counseling is called "hearing," using the English word. This term immediately arouses an antagonistic feeling in some persons for it reminds them of the disagreeable hearings held in internment camps, before leave clearance boards, and before segregation boards. All three of those hearing were called "hearing." Two other names for family counseling that I have heard of are Katei sodan, "household discussion;" or Kazoku chosa, "Family investigation." The latter term gives an unpleasant feeling to the interviewees." But more important than the names that are given to family counseling, is the attitudes of the interviewers. If the interviewer is pleasant, courteous and kindly, he gets more cooperation. The amount of information also depends upon the tactfulness and the ability

of the interviewers to draw out answers even though the interviewee does not intend to volunteer so much information.

When the evacuees go to the block office or to an empty apartment room provided as an office for the interviewer and the interpreter, they go with strain and wonder. They do not know what they are going to be asked. The amount of ease or uncertainty depends upon the emotional and mental balance of each of the individuals.

If the interviewing is held in the block office, the people who are being interviewed are often disturbed because people are always running in and out of the room. On the other hand, an empty apartment does give some privacy.

The interviewer ordinarily begins by trying to put the interviewees at ease. He then explains to each family what the situation is about, that he is not here to urge relocation (yet they stress relocation very much so that it really amounts to a relocation counseling session) but to find out what the needs of the people are. He says that he would like to know what the health and financial problems are right now, what their plans for relocation are, and where they intend to go. The interpreter translates what is being said.

After the explanation is finished, the interviewer asks questions from the basic family sheet. The beginning of the sheet is already filled, but nevertheless, he again asks such questions as: pre-evacuation address, number of persons in the family, marital status, date of birth, age, birth place, religion, and number of years of education. He also asks whether there are any health, legal or financial problems and whether there are any relatives in the United States, Hawaii or in other Centers. In some blocks the residents are asked about their relatives in Japan-but in other blocks this was not done.

Of course each individual answered questions according to the frame of mind that he happened to be in at the time. But it must be taken into consideration that the attitudes of the people have changed since last year, and probably will change again next year. If this family counseling had occurred last year, the response would have been different from this time.

The majority of the residents answer as truthfully as they can, as though they were standing before a judge. Some of the interviewees really have problems they wish to discuss while others wish they might be let alone.

The following paragraphs deal with what 9 persons said about family counseling. They represent, I think, the feeling of the majority of the Manzanar residents.

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I don't think it is of any use to ask us all the questions that the family counselors are asking. It is too late. They should have asked us before the February questionnaire. (This was said before the counseling).

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What! Again? How many times are they going to question us? They will never give us peace. (Said before the counseling).

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We have proven our loyalty when we complied with the curfew laws, the 5 mile limit, and by cooperating with all the regulations set up by various branches of the government. We have proven our loyalty when we evacuated agreeably to these desolate camps. We have proven our loyalty more than any other group of people in the United States and yet the United States still did not trust us so they gave us question 28. After they did that, they begin to question us and question us and tell us to relocate. What kind of place is this? (This after the interview).

A friend of mine was robbed of his household goods, which were brand new and were stored in his former home. The burglar was caught and sentenced to jail for 90 days after due process of law. He only received 90 days in jail while we who have proven beyond any doubt that we are good citizens were put into Centers without any trial for two years! Well, those of us who have been given clearance have proven or, you might say, have been given the verdict of not guilty of doing anything wrong. We should have been allowed to go back home long ago. The longer we are kept out of the West Coast Zone, the more suspicion is created. They say that there must be something wrong with our group or otherwise we would have been released long ago. (This is the response obtained when family counseling was mentioned.)

My gosh, another questionnaire. Haven't we answered enough? Is this another test? I suppose now that we have decided not to go to Tule Lake, they have decided to force us out of here. Maybe we should have been smart as the people who went to Tule. Over there, they aren't asked any more questions. (This before the counseling.)

I'm going to tell them anything they want to know. I'll just answer my questions as briefly as possible. I might answer by simply saying Yes or No. (This before the interview.)

They are not going to help us. They're just creating work for themselves that's all. (This after the interview.)

I will answer the questions the best I can. I might as well cooperate.
No harm done. (This before the interview.)

I can speak English so I do not think the interpreter should stay and
listen to our private business. (This before the interview.)

Waste time, asking questions again. (This before the interview.)

I wonder what they are going to ask this time? How shall I answer?
(Before the interview.)

Instead of taking so much time asking whether people would relocate or
not, I don't see why they don't take a poll through the medium of the
Free Press. They might as well ask: "Are you and your family going to
relocate? Answer 'Yes' or 'No.' Are you and your family going to stay in
the center for the duration? Answer 'Yes' or 'No'." Then the government
wouldn't be wasting so much time. Anyway, how can I tell whether I would
relocate next month or so? No one knows what will happen. If a good job
offer comes that is a sure thing, so that the whole family can go out,
then I would be willing to risk it. But having these interviewers ask us and
urge us to relocate does no good. When we make up our mind to go out then, we
will. (This before the interview.)

When he asked me if I had any financial problems, I said that I want
\$1,000 so that I can relocate. I lost my new furniture and other stuff.
I thought that was only fair, but he did not even write it down, so all of
this questioning is waste time. (This after the interview.)

My brothers are LA now; my parents are in their sixties. I don't know how people think we are going to support ourselves if we relocate. The interviewer kept returning to the subject of relocation all during the family counseling. She just tried to make us say that we would relocate. There is too much emphasis on relocation. When she started to ask us one question, before we could answer it, she switched the topic to relocation again. (This after the interview.)

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Why must the whole family go to the family counsel? One person in each family can go and tell what we think. I don't like to be questioned. (This before the interview.)

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Persons with health or legal problems seemed to have been benefited by the family counseling program to some degree. As for the health problems, persons who thought that they did not need to be examined but who told the interviewers about their health, were referred to the hospital so that they received physical check-ups.

Thus far 17 evacuees with legal problems were referred to the legal aid office by the interviewers. Of these people, quite a few never knew that they were entitled to soldier's family dependency allowances. Several insurance matters and problems dealing with property and real estate, have come up. A few cases were uncovered that never might have come up for investigation because of the lack of knowledge that there are places where they can go to for help, or because of procrastination.

Since the interviewers depend so much upon the interpreters, much care must be made to avoid making mistakes. For example, one woman was called to

the legal aid office because of a misunderstanding. She was reported to have said that she did not receive her soldier's allotment, though she has been receiving it. For 2 months her allotment did not come and she mentioned that in the course of conversation. Somehow there was a misunderstanding about it.

The Issei are irritated because they hate to be told to go out so often. This does not mean all of the Issei feel this way.

From the standpoint of the majority of the evacuees, family counseling, on the whole, does not seem to help very much. It only seems to make the people feel uneasy. But all of this questioning would not be a waste of time, if after gathering all the information that the WRA wished, the evacuees would be helped with their peculiar problems of being in the Center.