

Mess

## MESS HALLS

## IN

## TULE LAKE

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the distinguishing features of life in Tule Lake is the highly centralized organization of every day activity. This centralized control is clearly visible in the procurement, distribution and consumption of food on a community basis, rather than on a family basis. Food is ordered through a central office several months in advance, distributed from a central warehouse to block messhalls with an average capacity of about 250 persons. Here the food is cooked by a paid staff of workers who are on duty to prepare three meals a day according to menus distributed from the central office. The colonists are obliged to come to eat at a specified time when the mess gong sounds. On the other hand, they are not obliged to worry about meal planning or washing the dishes. This arrangement, which is new to the Japanese people, represents a major change to which the colonists must adjust as a result of their internment.

The uniformity of the treatment of individuals in a community messhall has contributed to another important feature of camp life--the reduction of social differences. Differences between the rich and the poor, the doctors, the lawyers, business men and the field laborer, domestic



workers and the like, the rural and urban people, the Japanese and the Americanized families have tended to be reduced somewhat by the common meals served in a common messhall.

#### B. Outside and Inside Comparison

The significance of the messhall is made clearer by a review of the differences in the present arrangement from those prior to evacuation. In the first place, the colonists are no longer able to eat what they desire, but must consume what is set on the table, which in turn is ordered from a central office. This applies especially to Japanese delicacies, most of which are not available at the present time. Also, in the method of preparation of the food, the matter is wholly in the hands of the cooks, and individual consideration for likes and dislikes or even for health conditions of individual colonists is not possible in the block messhall. Thus, while the quality of food has not always been poor compared to the food consumed by Japanese prior to evacuation, the lack of choice in the food and in the cooking has been a source of irritation to many people. The quantity served each diner was also often out of proportion to the needs of each individual. All of this has added to make many colonists feel the lack of control over one of the most important sources of pleasure and fear. This lack of control was most clearly demonstrated when there was an actual shortage of food in the warehouse, and the cooks had to put on the table what



little they were supplied with. Again, eating at a common messhall has disrupted the training routine formerly carried on in homes. Poor table manners, hasty eating, lack of conversation, little opportunity for training of little children in table manners seem to be the rule at present. While individual difference in cooking was accepted as natural on the outside, even though there was a great deal of difference between the food of the rich and the poor, under the present set-up individual differences between cooks in different messhalls have been sources of complaints from colonists. These differences bring out some of the changed conditions to which colonists have had to adjust.

#### C. Significance of Messhall Activities

In general in reviewing messhall activities it is desirable to learn out colonists have adjusted themselves to changed conditions existing within the Project. A list of items worth noting would probably include the following:

1. Effect on women's life
2. Effect on family
3. Effect on manners, especially of children
4. Effect on community
5. Analysis of messhall workers--  
characteristics, attitudes, status,  
role
6. Conflicts
7. Caucasian-Japanese relationship, including the ousting of Pilcher



#### D. Method of Writing

Because of the necessity of dealing with a wide variety of data, they will be organized under separate headings instead of treating the data chronologically. Wherever necessary the data will be treated chronologically under each separate section. Because of the nature of the headings, repetition in presenting data will be unavoidable. The following sections will be taken up in turn:

1. Administrative Organization
2. Organization within the messhall
3. Personal adjustment to the messhall
4. Analysis of messhall workers
5. Conflicts
6. Analysis and conclusion

## II. ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

### A. Personnel Organization

The Mess Management section is under the Transportation and Supply Division, which is in charge of Mortimer C. Cooke. The Mess Management section was at first in charge of Luther Stults, but early in the history of Tule Lake (around June, 1942) he left for a job in another relocation center. He was replaced by the present Project Steward Mr. Ralph E. Peck. Mr. Peck managed the tremendous job of feeding up to 15,000 people until he was provided with an Assistant Project Steward, Mr. Pilcher,<sup>1</sup> toward the latter part of July. Under the Project Steward was a Japanese Assistant Steward, George Kumasama.



In many cases the chief cook and messhall crew for a block messhall was selected in the assembly center before arriving in Tule Lake. Thus, in many cases, it was possible to keep together crews which had worked together in the assembly center messhall. While this was advantageous at times, it did not work out well when it perpetuated unpopular cliques or when the mess crew did not live in the block where they worked. In Walerga this arrangement was made by the mess supervisor, Mr. Maruno. In other cases the chief cook of a messhall was selected by the Project Steward (?)

The hiring of the messhall crew and organizing of the messhall was left up to the chief cook. A messhall crew consisted of a minimum number of 32 workers. These included:

- 1 chief cook
- 1 senior steward
- 5 cooks
- 5 kitchen helpers
- 10 waiters or waitresses
- 6 dishwashers
- 2 laundresses
- 3 janitors

Some messhalls had about 35 or 36 workers. While the matter of hiring was in the hands of the chief cook, this arrangement was not always strictly followed. The top cook, as in Block #25, was often consulted on this matter. Where the chief cook was felt to be incompetent, the senior steward



or the block manager sometimes stepped into the picture. The block people often demanded the firing of certain persons on the crew because he was not giving good services or because he did not live in the block and was therefore a burden on the block, since the food was rationed to each block according to the population in that block.

The chief cook, however, in most cases, was in complete charge of the messhall, and on his ability usually rested the relative success or failure of that messhall.

#### C. Procurement and Distribution of Food

Food was ordered by the Mess Management office through the Army Quartermaster three months (50 days?) in advance. For this reason, some food which was becoming scarce on the outside was relatively easy to get. On the other hand, since the order was placed some time in advance, it was not always possible to foresee the exact needs of the Colony. The rapid increase of colonists between June 15 and July 24 from less than 2,000 to almost 15,000 made the problem of food procurement and distribution difficult for the Project Steward. It was calculated, for instance, that during the latter part of July and the first part of August, supply for 11,000 persons was being distributed to 15,000 persons.<sup>1</sup> Since there was no emergency food fund until a strike was precipitated on August 15, there was no way in which to correct such food shortage immediately.

Food which arrived in the Project was stored in a central warehouse. From here it was distributed daily to



individual messhalls by means of trucks. At first, each block, which was supposed to have a population of about 250, was given about the same amount of food. Some correction was made for messhalls serving a larger or smaller number of people. There was a great deal of protest to this arrangement, especially when the food supply became low, because some blocks were able to serve more food per person than others. A great deal of protest was heard during the food shortage period in July and August. The matter was brought up in a Council meeting and distribution of food on a per capita basis recommended.<sup>1</sup> This was finally put into effect beginning September 25 when the population in the block according to the Housing Division report and daily head count was made the basis for food distribution to each messhall. Food was weighted or measured out according to the population in the block before being distributed.

From the beginning a uniform menu was distributed to each messhall for each day's meals, but it was rare to find two messhalls serving the same sort of meals at the same time. This did not cause much trouble until colonists began to compare meals in different messhalls and discover that other messhalls were serving better food than their own. In some cases, notably block 26, residents found that some choice food was not even appearing on their messhall table even when it appeared in other messhalls. Block residents,



in these cases, demanded that the menu issued by the central office be followed closely. Cooks in turn complained that the menu could not be followed when the food to cook such a menu was not delivered to the messhall, which was often true. They were forced to substitute often when sufficient food was not sent to be able to follow the menu closely. At times cooks preferred to cook food in their own style instead of following the menu. Sometimes it was a matter of finding the cleaning of fresh vegetables, for instance, too troublesome, and they preferred to open cans, while sacks and crates of costly fresh vegetables were allowed to rot or to be fed to pigs. This wastage was sometimes due to the overflowing of messhalls with vegetables which they could not use all at once.

It was customary to deliver several days' or a week's supply of certain staple products to the messhalls at one time. Milk, fresh vegetable, meat and such perishables were delivered daily. When this was done there was a tendency on the part of some cooks to save food for a possible shortage. The Mess Management looked upon this as hoarding and frowned on it because, for one thing, it created a temptation for cooks and kitchen crew to use the supply of food for private consumption instead of giving the block people all of the food they deserved. The fear of a possible shortage, however, was a legitimate one, and even in blocks where no pilfering was allowed and the block people given



full benefit of the food supply (for instance, in block 25) food was regularly saved for possible shortage. This turned out to be a wise policy when food shortage occurred in July and August.

When Mr. Pilcher took over the post of Assistant Project Steward, he threatened to institute the "Walerga System." Mr. Pilcher had been the Steward at Walerga, and had made himself unpopular with the people in that assembly center. His system consisted of sending only one day's supply to the mess hall every day. Any surplus food which was not served to the people was collected and taken back to the warehouse. This insured, for one thing, that food would be less likely to be pilfered. However, it made it difficult for the cooks to plan ahead of time for meals because they did not know what would be delivered that day. Also, when sufficient food was not delivered on a certain day, there was no way of alleviating the situation because no other food was on hand. About the time of the strike, Mr. Pilcher actually carried out his "Walerga System" in spite of pleas from the Mess Advisory Council that it would work hardship on the cooks, waste truck tires, and generally would be inadvisable in such a large place as this. While several days' supply of food is sent to each messhall at present, cooks have been warned not to hoard any food. However, the practice seems to be in most messhalls to keep a supply of food on hand at all times to meet a possible food shortage.



The quantity and quality of food sent to the individual messhalls varied slightly from time to time. A rough idea of the quality of the food can be gotten from a sample weekly menu (September 2 to 9).

Wednesday, September 2:

Breakfast

Grapefruit  
Cereal and Milk  
French toast  
Coffee  
Jelly

Dinner

Soup  
Baked pork & beans  
Lettuce and radish  
Salad  
Bread pudding with  
raisins

Supper

Beef sukiyaki  
Beet salad  
Rice  
Tea  
Apple sauce

September 3: Thursday

Breakfast

Cantaloupe  
Cereal & milk  
Minced ham  
One egg  
Toast  
Coffee

Dinner

Veal stew  
Creamed cauliflower  
with carrots  
Rice and tea  
Dried apple  
cobbler

Supper

Ham hocks with  
cabbage  
Soup  
Farm peas  
Rice  
Tea  
Homemade Japanese pickles  
Watermelon

September 4: Friday

Breakfast

Stewed figs  
Cereal & milk  
Scrambled eggs  
Toast  
Jam  
Coffee

Dinner

Creamed codfish  
Turnips  
Lettuce, radish  
and onion salad  
Steamed rice  
Gelatin with  
banana  
Tea

Supper

Fish chowder  
Baked fish  
Tomato  
Rice  
Tea  
Japanese pickle  
Fresh apple



## Saturday, September 5:

Breakfast

Dried prunes  
Cereal and milk  
Bacon and eggs  
Fried potatoes  
Bread and butter  
Coffee

Dinner

Beef stew with  
Vegetable  
Farm beet salad  
Rice  
Tea

Supper

Chop suey  
Lettuce, tomato  
& pepper salad  
Rice  
Tea  
Apple betty pudding

## Sunday, September 6:

Breakfast

Grapefruit  
Cereal and milk  
Hot cakes  
Syrup  
Coffee

Dinner

Fricassee of lamb  
with farm peas  
Mashed potatoes  
Vegetable  
Rice  
Tea  
Canned plums

Supper

Beef with string  
beans  
Turnips  
Rice  
Tea  
Cheese  
Japanese pickle

## Monday, September 7:

Breakfast

Apple sauce  
Cereal and milk  
French toast  
Syrup  
Coffee

Dinner

Frankfurter and  
Cabbage  
Vegetable  
Rice  
Tea  
Pickles  
Fruit jello

Supper

Cold meat  
Potato salad  
Cheese  
Bread and jam  
Apple

## Tuesday, September 8:

Breakfast

Orange  
Cereal and milk  
Scrambled eggs  
Toast  
Coffee  
Jam

Dinner

Baked pork and  
beans  
Vegetable salad  
Rice  
Tea  
Bread and butter  
Stewed apricot

Supper

Beef hearts  
Spanish sauce  
Vegetable salad  
Rice  
Tea  
Homemade Japanese  
pickles  
Stuffed apple  
and raisin

While the quality of food was never exceedingly poor,  
although the quantity at one time was small, food of high



quality usually was not distributed to the messhall. While roasts were sometimes available, chops and steaks were hardly ever distributed in sufficient quantity to feed to the people as such. Although turkey was available in sufficient quantity for everyone to enjoy on Thanksgiving Day, (70 pounds per 100 persons), chicken has yet to be served. At first fish was served regularly only once a week, but on request from the Japanese, this was increased after the slow-up strike to twice a week. While Japanese in general like fish, some people did not like the increase of fish on the menu. In terms of per capita cost it was estimated that during August only thirty-five cents had been spent for food per person. At the time of farm strike this amount was thought to be too low and the Administration conceded to raise the figure to forty-five cents. By the time of the next slow-up strike (October 12), however, it was calculated that only thirty-nine cents was being spent per person for food and once again a demand was made to raise the amount to the full forty-five cents. It was also discovered that the better cuts of meat were going only to the Personnel messhall, and this practice was condemned by Mr. Shirrell himself, and a practice of distributing halves instead of cuts to the Personnel messhall was undertaken. As a result of the slow-up strike, more meat was promised in November and this seems to have been carried out. The national ration of two and one-half pounds of



meat per person, however, was made the maximum limit.

To a large extent the quality of food, as far as the people were concerned, has depended on the quantity distributed to the messhalls. During most of June food was fairly plentiful, it seemed, and the quality of meals reasonable. Bacon and eggs, for instance, were served together in the morning, which was rare after that. The colonists had just begun to enter the Project in large numbers after June 15. By the end of June the population had jumped up to 9,000, and by July 24 to almost 15,000. All through the latter part of July and the first part of August, food shortage was acutely felt by all messhalls. Since there was a shortage of meat, it was found necessary in most cases to cook what little was available with other things into stews and chop sueys. While this was the usual method of cooking with the Japanese people, anyway, there was a great deal of dissatisfaction about the quality of food served. The explanation of the food shortage was that food for 11,000 was being distributed to 16,000. As a result of the farm strike, when the right to purchase food locally in case of emergency was obtained, the quality and quantity of food was slightly improved.

Besides, meat, sugar, butter and eggs have been rationed quite strictly. Sufficient milk has been distributed to messhalls to make it possible for anyone who desired milk to have it at least two times and often three times a day. The amount of butter available to the



colonists have been small and has steadily declined, but it has not worked a great deal of hardship on the people. Eggs, at first, were distributed in half cases and in cases, but at the present time, even as little as two dozen at a time is being distributed. At most only one egg per person is distributed at the present time. The strictest ration has been on sugar, which is also being rationed on the outside. Until September 25, sugar was being sent to the mess-halls according to the following schedule:

250 - 274 people	--	14 lbs.	per day
275 - 299 people	--	18 lbs.	" "
300 or over	--	25 lbs.	" "

Because of the acute shortage of sugar this system was found to be unsatisfactory, and since September 25 sugar was distributed to each messhall on the basis of one ounce per person according to Government regulation. This sugar ration has been a problem to both cooks and colonists. Coffee is still being served once a day and causes no hardship.

#### D. Miscellaneous

Of the kitchen crew, at first only the chief <sup>cook</sup>/was entitled to professional classification and hence to a pay of \$19.00. The cooks and senior steward were being paid \$16.00 while the kitchen helpers, diswashers and waiters were being paid \$12.00 (?). It was conceded by everyone that the cooks worked hard and long hours. Especially during the summer they were required to work in the kitchen



long hours where it was hot even without the heat of the stoves. While the cooks worked in shifts, nevertheless they helped on each other's shift and put in more than eight hours of work daily on the average. One steward, for instance, estimated that the cooks in his messhall worked at least ten hours a day. Compared to the five or six hours put in by the rest of the kitchen crew, this was obviously unfair to them. After a conference of Project Heads in San Francisco when the ruling on the wage scale was changed, the cooks were all raised to the professional classification. This probably served to alleviate some of the tension that existed in the kitchen.

Work clothes for outside workers were obtained quite early. It was found necessary to offer clothes to the farm workers, especially to get more of them to go out to do necessary work out in the field. Work clothing was limited largely to outside workers. Some uniforms had arrived for messhall workers, but not very many.<sup>1</sup> Up until the time of the mess slow-up strike mess workers were dissatisfied because work clothes and warm clothes had not been furnished them. When the strike was being settled it was revealed that uniforms for mess workers had already been ordered and were due at any time. Warm clothing also was demanded at the time of the strike, and the Administration promised that it would be distributed immediately. At this time a red plaid jacket for women workers and a mackinaw, jacket,

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breeches and a cap for men workers were distributed regardless of type of work engaged in.

While in general everyone is required to eat in the same messhall and the same food as anyone else, special kitchens have been set up to meet certain requirements. For children up to two years of age, for instance, special food has been prepared by a crew in twenty-one different messhalls. Special food has included canned fruit juice, fresh fruit, egg, and milk served once a day.<sup>1</sup>

For babies and nursery school children, baby formula and milk has been provided in #720. This special milk has been sent to messhalls to be distributed to colonists requiring it.

For diabetics and ulcer cases and convalescents a special block has been set aside. Special food is served in Block 9 (?) to meet the needs of patients. Persons who can not eat the food served in the other messhalls, after receiving a permit from the hospital, are allowed to eat in this special messhall.

For wardens, firemen, truck drivers and other night workers, a night crew was put in at mess 18. Because people who were not supposed to eat there often came to eat at night, a regulation was passed to require a note from the Division Head before workers were allowed to eat at this messhall.

For a long time there was a talk of building a messhall out on the farm for the farmers. Food for the farmers was



cooked in two messhalls and taken out to the farm. A shack was built to provide shade in which the farm workers could eat. After the cold weather set in a messhall was built for the farm workers, but food was still being cooked in two messhalls within the Project.

In order to encourage better management of messhalls, a system of awards two times a month to the best messhall was started in August. The messhall to receive the first prize was Mess No. 48. At the time the prize was awarded it was said by some people that this block was able to receive the prize only because it kept closely to the menu and otherwise followed the instructions of the Administration closely. This system of awards has not proved popular, and very little has been heard of it since then.<sup>1</sup>

A bakery to serve the messhalls and also a school of bakery was planned in July, but this has not materialized along with the schools, church and gymnasium that were promised at the outset by the Administration.

### III. ORGANIZATION OF MESSHALLS

The organization of the messhalls was left up to the chief cooks who were all Japanese residents. Their ability to manage people, their skill in cooking, and their taste determined how food was served to the people in his block. If a cook were addicted to favoritism he was likely to give extra food to certain persons or to his crew. If he were lazy he was likely to waste some of the vegetables because they were

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too troublesome to clean. If his relations with people in general were poor, he was likely to quarrel with the block people. If he were a good chief cook, there would be very few complaints from the crew or the people in the block. If he had too many faults there were likely to be many complaints centered around his messhall.

#### A. General Routine

Block people are called to the messhall in most cases by beating a metal gong. The beating is different enough in adjoining blocks to enable the block people to distinguish their own mess gong. In the morning the gong is sounded at 7, at lunch at 12:20 and in the evening at 6. The time, however, differs with messhalls slightly, some messhalls ringing their gong earlier than others. Some messhalls, for instance, do not have breakfast until 7:30 and others have dinner at 5:30.

At any rate, block residents are required to come to eat when the gong is sounded and others in the block eat. The seating capacity of the messhall is anywhere from 200 to 300 on the average and accommodates all of the block people at one time. Most of the food is already on the table when the people come streaming in, so that they are able to start eating without any waiting or formality. Since there is a waitress to every two or three tables, people can usually get drinks and second helpings of food without too much delay. As a result, eating is an efficient routine. Since the waitresses are in a hurry to finish with their work, as



soon as they can because the quicker they are through the more time they have to themselves, they begin to clean up as soon as they can. For this reason, ten minutes after the gong has sounded people begin to leave their table, and within fifteen minutes or twenty minutes most of the people are through. When a person is thirty minutes late, in most mess-halls, he has a difficult time getting food at all.

The tables at which people eat are determined differently in different messhalls. In the beginning everyone sat randomly wherever they pleased, but this was soon abandoned for a more systematic arrangement. In some messhalls only one door was used as an entrance and residents expected to fill up one table at a time. This meant that people were able to sit with whomever they entered the messhall with and were able each day to see different faces sitting with them at the same table. This had the advantage of filling up the tables one by one, and also of making sure that each table was filled up, thus doing away with surplus food at any table which occurred when the full quota of eight were not present at any one meal. Some blocks preferred to employ the so-called "family table system." With this arrangement each table was reserved for a family or combination of families so long as the table was filled up. This made it possible for families and close friends to eat together at the same table every day, but also precluded the possibility of seeing different people at each meal. Several advantages were claimed for this



system. For one thing there would be an economy of food because if children could not eat all of the food it could be eaten by an older person in the family. The distribution of food served in a common platter was more likely to be done with less hard feeling among diners. This system brought the families closer together, and gave more of the home atmosphere than the other system. Also, it made it more possible for parents to train their children in table manners. Since each table and each place was reserved for a definite person it made it harder for outsiders to come into a strange messhall to eat, which was much more easily done under the other system. One block, however, found this system unsatisfactory because workers did not always come back to their own messhall to eat and this meant that their table would have more food than others where all eight turned up to eat.

In most messhalls, especially those using the family system, plates and utensils were already laid out on the table when colonists came in to eat. They sat down and dished out their own share of food from a common platter. When there was a second helping the waitress or waiter brought it for them. Water, tea and milk were poured by the waitress. In the family system, especially where a certain waitress generally took charge of the same tables, it made for closer relationship between the colonist and the waitress, unless they did not like each other. When the meal was over



in many messhalls the colonists left the dirty dishes on the table, leaving the entire task of cleaning up to the waitresses. In some messhalls food was served cafeteria style, and colonists were required to bring their own dirty dishes back to the kitchen.

Where the family system was employed in some messhalls the position of the families within the messhall was rotated occasionally because certain parts of the messhall were more desirable because they were warmer. In some messhalls the waitresses rotated the tables they were required to serve. In Block 6, for instance, where firemen from Station No. 1 ate, girls had to take turns serving them because they did not like the task.

Because of the rationing of food according to the population in the block, visitors have been discouraged in all blocks. In some blocks the head waiter has acted as the doorman to see that outsiders did not come in to eat. In others meal cards were made and distributed to the block people. An occasional visitor was allowed in most blocks, usually with the permission of the chief cook. Blocks which were noted for good cooking and good food were apt to find many visitors. This was true of Block No. 48, which won the prize for the best-managed messhall.

#### B. Workers' Routine

The kitchen crew consists usually of one chief cook, four cooks, about five kitchen helpers, one senior steward,



several janitors, ten or twelve waiters or waitresses, five or six dishwashers and two laundresses.

Next to the chief cook, the senior steward's position in the messhall is usually the next highest, although the cooks sometimes retain the higher status. The cooks have been receiving \$19.00 for some time now, while the steward has only recently been promised a raise to \$19.00. The main duty of the steward is to watch the food supply and to keep the stock room clean. When workers are to be hired or fired or when a policy governing the messhall is determined, he is often consulted by the chief cook.

The cooks and their helpers usually work in two shifts, half taking responsibility for the morning work and half the responsibility in the afternoon. In many messhalls there are overlaps and all cooks and helpers help those on other shifts. Where there have been friction among cooks and cook's helpers in some messhalls the two shifts have been clearly divided in order to avoid further clash. These people are responsible for preparing food according to the direction of the chief cook and of keeping the kitchen clean.

The waiters and waitresses usually have a head waiter or waitress or sometimes both who supervise the waiters and waitresses. The duties of the waiters and waitresses are to set the table, serve the block people at the tables, remove the dishes from the table and clean up the table later. They also help the dishwashers wipe the dishes.



They are usually assigned to take care of several tables. They are also required periodically to clean the windows and other fixtures.

The dishwashers wash the dishes, take care of the garbage and keep their part of the kitchen clean. The janitors, after each meal, sweep the floor and mop it. The laundresses wash the uniforms and aprons of the kitchen workers.

The cooks have to be on duty several hours before meal time in order to prepare the meal, and usually they put in a full eight hours or often as much as ten hours daily. This has been a source of pride on their part, however, and they have often resented criticism of their cooking from the block people because they have been working harder than other workers. The waiters and waitresses usually report to work only about an hour before meal time, and they are usually through with their work an hour after meal has begun. This makes the total number of hours that they work six hours a day and during this time they take time off to take their own meals. This has enabled them to have sufficient amount of leisure to attend classes in the morning or afternoon or in the evening or otherwise spend their spare time as they wish.

In most messhalls the workers eat before they start to work. This seems only natural. But in at least one messhall workers all eat after the block people have eaten and after their own work is over. This was done in order to conserve as much food as possible for the people in the



block. Ordinarily mess workers usually ate more than their share of choice food such as meat or fruit. In some mess-halls, in fact, colonists complained that such a thing as ham never appeared on their table because it was consumed by the workers. To avoid this difficulty, especially during the period of food shortage, workers were asked to eat after the block had eaten. Many times there wasn't sufficient food, often the desirable dish, for the workers, and in this case the cooks quickly cut up something to make up for it. While this arrangement was not particularly satisfactory to the workers, in this particular messhall (#25), there was no trouble among the crew because of this. As a result, even during the food shortage, this messhall was able to supply the block people with sufficient food to keep them from being too dissatisfied.

In many messhalls the chief cook or the steward were tempted to take home choice food or to eat them before they were cooked for the block people. When a box of apples arrived, for instance, in some messhalls it was customary for workers to reach in and eat as many as they desired. This sort of discipline on the part of some of the heads in the messhalls has made it difficult to control the rest of the crew in yielding to temptation to consume food which rightly belonged to the block people. In extreme cases meat and sugar and fruit have been taken home by the workers. In other cases the chief cook has shown favoritism and has allowed only



certain workers advantages of this sort, which has caused a split among the workers. Where both the chief cook and the steward have been free from temptation, it was possible to keep the entire crew from consuming more than their rightful share of food. Apple boxes, for instance, when they arrived were not opened until the second box arrived several days later and an apple could be distributed to each person. In messhalls where the apple box was quickly opened and workers allowed to eat the fruit, it was discovered that apples could not be given to the colonists because there weren't enough to pass out to allow one apple to each colonist. By the time the second box arrived, too many apples were consumed from the first box to distribute them to the block people.

#### C. Special Food

The problem of the cook has been to serve what food they had on hand to the people in the most satisfactory manner. Where the cooks were unskilled, lazy or did not take pride in serving delicious food to the block people, it has been difficult to present the people with satisfactory food. Even when food was well-prepared as it was on Thanksgiving Day when turkey, cranberry and all of the other trimmings were served, it was difficult to please the people. The food was likely to be cold, the quantity was usually not adapted to each individual need, the seasoning could not suit everyone, and the atmosphere was not conducive to enjoyment of a meal. As a result people usually gulped



down their food hurriedly.

When some cooks, because of food shortage or of convenience served combinations of meat and vegetable dishes in the form of sukiyaki or stew day after day, it was naturally difficult to satisfy the people. While some people liked Japanese style of cooking, a lot of rice, and fish at least twice a week, others preferred the American style with vegetables and meat cooked separately, and less fish. No matter how hard the cooks tried they were bound to receive some criticism from some source. When people began to compare food in various messhalls this criticism was bound to increase, because individual differences in the skill of the cooks were bound to become evident.

The problems of the cooks were increased by the fact that many of the foods listed on the menu sent from the central office were not suitable to the Japanese people. Beans, for instance, were listed at least once a week, and this was an item which Japanese did not care for at all. There was also too much noodles and macaroni on stock because the Japanese preferred to take their starch in the form of boiled rice daily. On top of that it was almost impossible to get any of the special Japanese food which made meals appetizing to the majority of the Japanese people. Only an inferior grade of Shoyu was available on the table. The only other Japanese food available was tsukemono, which was pickled by the messhall from vegetables brought in from the farm.



Ajinomoto, which the Japanese had come to rely on a great deal in seasoning dishes of all types was not available. It was impossible to prepare such favorite dishes as osushi (rice balls) because of lack of special ingredients. Sashimi (raw fish) was a delicacy to many Japanese, both Isseis and Niseis, but the type of fish such as tuna or sea bass which was suited in preparing this dish was never sent to the messhalls. For this reason several blocks ordered such fish directly and have prepared sashimi for the block people at their own expense.

The shortage of sugar has also caused some problems. In some messhalls it has been rationed by waiters going around and limiting the number of teaspoons of sugar each individual could have. In other messhalls sugar was already placed in the coffee to make the placing of sugar on the table unnecessary. In other messhalls sugar has been rationed by putting so much in the bowl on the table. Where this method was employed and the family system was used it was possible for the family to take home whatever surplus sugar left in the bowl. Since coffee was served only in the morning, sugar appeared on the table only once a day. Because of sugar shortage cooks have not been able to make pastries often, which would have improved the meals. Even when pies or puddings were made, they were likely to lack sufficient sugar to make them taste sweet. Because some messhalls made pastries more often than others, this again caused unfavorable



comparison and criticism of the cooks.

There has been a general shortage of meat, eggs and butter. Although roast is prepared almost once a week, steaks have appeared only several times within the past four or five months. At one time heart was served frequently and greatly disliked by most colonists, but it has ceased to appear on the table. Cooks have often found it necessary to cook meat with vegetables in order to serve it at all. Eggs have often had to be served as French toast, and even when scrambled have often been mixed with too much milk or potato. Bacon seems to have disappeared entirely in recent months. While a possible shortage of milk with the coming of cold weather has been talked about, colonists can still have it at least two times a day and often three.

Another factor which has contributed to the difficulty of satisfying the block people is the lack of sufficient utensils. The lack of rice bowls and chopsticks, especially to eat a final bowl of ochazuke (rice and tea), which has been customary in finishing up a Japanese meal, has been a source of irritation to some people. The fact that most of the time stew, rice, salad, and tsukemono were all placed on a single plate has served to make the food less agreeable. In blocks which have been fitted up late it has been necessary for residents to bring their own silverware to the messhall.

#### IV. ADJUSTMENTS

Up to this point the pages have been mainly devoted to a description of the manner in which food was procured,



distributed to messhalls and prepared for the people in individual blocks. Only incidentally have there been indications of the reaction of the people to present method of food consumed. In this section the effect of this new set-up on the people in general will be explored more carefully. Liberty, however, must be taken in referring from conditions indicated in proceeding sections the effect on the people, because at this point adequate sampling of the people's reaction is not available.

#### A. Community Solidarity

Probably one of the most important effects of the system of community messhalls is in the strengthening of the block as a unit at the expense of the solidarity of the family. Within the family eating constituted probably the major activity, especially of the housewife, who was required to plan, shop for and prepare three meals a day regularly. The existence of a central organization which took care of all the food needs of the average colonists through its centralized buying, community messhalls, and special help to wash the dishes left the family without one of its major functions, thus weakening the family as a group. Pleasing the husband and children with carefully-prepared food or with favorite dishes was no longer possible.

On the other hand, the solidarity of the block as a unit has been greatly strengthened by the existence of a community messhall. Having to see each other every day three



times a day and being required to exchange greetings even with strangers has done much to get the block people acquainted with each other. Daily contact with the waiters, and the cooks, has also helped to increase block solidarity. Announcements by the block managers or the chief cook at meal time has been another means of increasing the common knowledge and hence the solidarity of the block people. Thus we see that the centralization of mess activity resulting in a common chief cook, common eating place, common food, have increased the feeling of the people that they belong to a block. Pride in one's own messhall is common among the people and is an indication of the sense of belonging to a group which has been fostered by the existence of a common messhall.

Another factor in community solidarity has been the leveling process which has resulted from the equal treatment of individuals of all status. The rich no longer eat better food than the poor. The efficient housewife can not boast of her skill any longer. School children have no reason for comparing the lunches of his neighbor's children with their own. The tendency, of course, has been for those who were used to better food than served in the messhall to complain of the poor quality of the food and show signs of not enjoying the meals. Those who were less fortunate in the past, however, are able to partake of the food presented to them with less adverse criticisms. This leveling process



has broken down former barriers created by difference in social and economic status. Common fears and grudges centered around the messhall have also served to bind the people of a block together on an equal level.

It is true, however, that such block solidarity is not very visible yet. But even to strangers in a block persons sitting at the same table and nearby tables are gradually becoming familiar as the months roll by. Faces are becoming more familiar, and comments on the personality of individuals are beginning to spread to more and more people within the block. Persons who are pretty, those who are snobbish, others who are peculiarly anti-social are all receiving comments. With such daily contacts a person or a family can not remain oblivious to the people whom they meet daily in the messhall without drawing comments from others. While antagonisms and barriers may arise between families and individuals because of personal reasons, the whole process is a gradual closing in together of the block as a unit. It is similar to the process of a large city taking on the qualities of a small town where everyone knows everyone else, if such an analogy is permissible.

#### B. General Dissatisfaction

The reaction of the people to the centralized system of feeding has been a general dissatisfaction. While a few people seemed to be satisfied with the food they ate in the messhall, there has been practically no enthusiastic outbursts



in favor of the new way of taking care of the food needs of the people. The fact that the system was new to the people was enough to cause dissatisfaction in the beginning. The lack of choice of food and inability to have food cooked in a special way alone have been sources of dissatisfaction. On top of this, poor table manners employed by people eating at the same table were irritating to those brought up to observe table etiquette. The stretching of arms for food on the table, eating with mouths open or making of irritating noises when chewing food have caused some persons dismay. This relationship has probably existed between those brought up in the city and those who lived in rural districts. The former has tended to look on the latter as being poorly bred, while the country people have often thought many people from the city as snobs.

During July and August the dissatisfaction due to the food shortage and poor quality of food served was especially great. Since then it has tended to subside gradually. At the time of the mess slow-up strike, the poor quality of the food was given as one of the reasons for the strike, but many people did not feel that a strike was warranted on that basis. According to Mr. Taketa, chairman of the Mess Supervisory Council and member of the Fair Practice Committee, at the time of the slow-up strike he was asked by a clerk working in the Administration Building why the strike was being held. Mr. Taketa demanded to know whether



the quality of food he was receiving was sufficiently good. Mr. Taketa was dismayed when the clerk replied that he thought it was good enough and did not believe that a strike was necessary. At that time better food was promised, and this seems to have been carried out. Fish was increased to two times a week, and there seems to have been a slight increase in better quality meat.

Since the strike, the general trend has been less and less dissatisfaction. Part of this was probably due to the slight improvement in the quality of the food. The fact that most colonists had been in the Project for at least four or five months and had become gradually accustomed to the messhall was probably another important factor. Many of the sources of complaint, such as poor cooks, poor system of distributing food and the like had been somewhat eliminated, too. Also, dissatisfaction in general had greatly subsided since the slow-up strike. Pay checks arrived, clothing was distributed to workers, such disturbing problems as the broadcast and the theater projects had been settled to the satisfaction of most of the people. This release of tension in other areas probably served to reduce dissatisfaction with the messhall.

Even now, however, the general opinion of people seems to be that they would prefer to cook for themselves and eat at home. They have not as yet come to appreciate the



advantages of a community messhall, which H. G. Wells saw as a part of a future Modern World. How long it would take for the people to come to appreciate this new set-up and what factors would serve to bring this realization about, or whether the people will ever come to see the advantageous side of the messhall picture will be an interesting point to observe.

The dissatisfaction of the people with the food served in the messhall has been expressed in other ways besides verbally. Hurried eating, for instance, is a partial indication of the lack of enjoyment of eating at the mess table. Many people are through eating within ten minutes, and a person who eats slowly and tries to enjoy his meal finds himself coming the earliest, but still eating after all of the others have gone out. Some mothers have been alarmed because their children gulp down a few mouthfuls of food and then rush out to play.

Some people have protested against the food served in the messhall by not eating some food such as fish, stew, beets, which they did not like. Some children ate very little and gave their mothers much cause for worry. Others did not come to eat breakfast, feeling that it was not worth the trouble of getting up at 7 while it was still dark for a poor meal.

Most families took to cooking and eating snacks at home. This is probably the greatest indication of unwillingness



of the colonists to part entirely with family cooking. Sometimes food was brought home from the messhall table and recooked in individual apartments to suit the taste of the members in the family. Some families always had breakfast or a night snack at home. Canned meat, fruit, soup and the like were opened to be eaten leisurely in the family circle. Where there was a child, a weak or sick person, or an old person in the family who could not eat the food served in the messhall and required special food, eating at home was done regularly. Coffee, tea and sweets, especially, were served at home to supplement the food eaten at the messhall.

#### C. Feeling of Insecurity

Because the control of buying and preparing of food was left entirely in the hands of other people over whom the block people had very little control, a feeling of insecurity and helplessness could not be avoided on the part of colonists. This feeling was enhanced by the general belief among the people that the Caucasian heads were making profits for themselves out of the food that was supposed to go to the people. The rumor that rice which should have been sent to the messhalls was being sold in the canteen was an indication of just such a suspicion. The General Manager of the Community Enterprises, Sumio Miyamoto, has claimed that this rumor is false. The Japanese in key positions, also, have been suspected of favoritism and pilfering of food. The Japanese have been suspected of this even from the Caucasian



mess investigating committee, and there seems to be very good grounds for this belief. People in the warehouse, truck drivers, chief cooks, senior stewards, and other mess workers have all been suspected of pilfering food belonging to the people. There was also a fear that for one reason or another it would not be possible to receive food from the outside world. Breakdown in transportation during the cold spell, lack of transportation, food shortage on the outside, the of the Army Quartermaster were some of the reasons given for this fear. These fears have resulted in messhalls storing a surplus of food for emergency, in spite of instructions from the Administration warning against the hoarding of food. Left-over rice has been distributed to block people to be dried and stored in case of lack of food. During the farm strike which threatened to extend to mess workers, more than the usual number of people brought food at the canteen to store at home in case of emergency. Such staple products as rice and flour were bought by many of these people. The lack of sugar and the inability to buy it privately has caused some concern to those who looked forward to a nightly snack of coffee or tea. Appearance of saccharine tablets in the canteens served partially to allay this fear. Some people were able to bring home sugar left over on the mess-hall table every morning. Shortage in coffee and tea caused some disturbance, but not a great amount of fear. Some families were already brewing tea from barley and other farm



products and were delighted with the substitute. The shortage of candies was a source of irritation to many families, and many orders were sent outside to friends for these. Those who could not eat all of the food served in the messhall and who did not like to drink milk, felt that they were becoming under-nourished. Many mothers shared this feeling because they feared that their children were not getting the right type and sufficient quantity of nourishment.

The feeling of insecurity was probably greatest at the time of the farm strike when food was scarce and antagonism existed between the Japanese people and Mr. Pilcher. When the mess-slow-up strike went into effect, there did not seem to be so much feeling of insecurity on the part of the people that they would not be able to obtain food. Since then the insecure feeling, along with the dissatisfaction, has gradually diminished. Cold weather has arrived, but except for the scarcity of fresh vegetables, there has been no noticeable slow-down of the rate of flow of food into the Project.

#### D. Pilfering

Pilfering of food has been only one of the numerous causes of conflicts arising in the mess division, but it is worth mentioning at this point because such tendencies have been observed in other phases of camp life and seems to be a result of the new condition that people have had to face within the Project. Community control and planning of activities



within the Project, together with the lack of resources with which to buy goods freely through proper channels, seem to have increased the temptation among colonists to pilfer food which rightly belonged to the people in general. Food has been known to be taken from the box cars, from the warehouse, from the butcher shop, from the delivery truck, from the messhall pantry. This has meant unscrupulous workers all up and down the line of workers. In some messhalls cooks and workers have assumed that they were entitled to extra food and usually ate more than their share of choice food. Truck drivers demanded apples for their crew whenever they delivered supplies. Since some chief cooks could not avoid the temptation of taking food home from the messhall, they had to let the rest of the workers do the same. The surprising thing about pilfering is not that it is being practiced, but that people who formerly would not have stolen even a penny have come to accept the practice as being natural. Farmers have been in the habit of bringing home whatever vegetable they needed at home, even though they were asked not to do this. Authorities were more strict about wild geese being brought home, because it infringed on a State law, but farmers brought them home whenever they could. The same sort of thing has occurred with lumber being used for construction. While many people claim that such behavior is "natural," we should look for the environmental circumstances which facilitate such behavior.



Mr. Fagan, Mr. Conner and Mr. Fleming reporting on mess-hall conditions on October 2, noted in their general recommendations as follows:

"There is a question as to whether Japanese assistants in certain key positions are willing to take sufficient responsibility. The pressure from friends and relatives are tremendous.

"There have been many cases of favoritism to individuals or to groups, both in the food warehouse and the messhalls. The committee is not disposed itself to blame Japanese assistants for this condition. It seems to be inevitable in the circumstances of the Project. However, if this is true, it may be necessary to have additional Caucasian assistants in the food warehouse and in inspection of mess-halls."

#### E. Position of Woman

The centralization of mess activity has affected the woman the most because the making of meals constituted one of her most time-consuming and important activities. Because she has been deprived of this job her usefulness and consequently her status has been reduced correspondingly. It is true that she has more leisure and is able to attend classes in English, sewing, flower arrangement, artificial flower making and the like, but she has ceased to be as indispensable as she formerly has been. In preparing meals, not only was the woman fulfilling a necessary task, she was also in a position to please members of the family by making



special dishes to suit them. The family table was also a place where the parents could teach children good manners and give them advice on a great many things. This has not been easy to do in a community messhall when a great many strangers were around and everyone ate in a hurry and left the table as soon as they could. The lack of necessity of skill in cooking at the present time may serve to lower the value as wives of girls who have been trained to take interest in domestic arts, and proportionately increase the popularity of the girl who can be a good companion to the boy. We should at least expect some change to result from this shifting of the responsibility for the preparation of meals from the shoulders of women to that of community workers.

Mess activity, then, has contributed to two large processes: first, the leveling of the people through uniform meals and uniform eating place; second, community planning and control of activities, which is characterized by central meal planning, buying and mass feeding. These processes have caused a great deal of dissatisfaction and sense of insecurity in general, especially during the initial period of adjustment. There are indications that people are making better and better adjustment to the new set-up, even if it is only a matter of getting used to new conditions. Pilfering has cropped up as a by-product of this new system and seems to persist. While this new arrangement has affected the woman the most, it is not known yet what affects have actually taken place.



## V. ANALYSIS OF WORKERS

The analysis of messhall workers can be conveniently divided into the analysis of cooks and other workers.

Both the nature of the job, their status, and the type of people accepting those jobs serve to make this division a natural one. In general, cooks are more likely to be Isseis, while diswashers and waiters are more likely to be Niseis.

### A. Cooks

Cooks, in general, have tended to be Isseis or older Niseis. In almost all cases they are men. The requirements of the job of a cook have been rather strenuous, being required to put in long hours in front of a hot stove and being responsible for the food of hundreds of people. In general this has made the job of a cook rather unattractive. On the other hand, cooks have usually not been willing to quit even when a great many complaints have been forwarded to them from various sources. The position of cook has offered a certain amount of prestige. To some it has also meant an opportunity to pilfer food. Interest in the work probably has attracted many cooks to the job. It was also an indoor job and a clean one and a warm one during the winter time are factors which made it attractive to many people.

The status of the cooks brings to light interesting points. On the outside world the status of a cook is not very high or very low. It is one of those positions which



are filled by Japanese without attracting many comments, good or bad. This is especially true of restaurant cooks. Domestic cooks were more likely to be looked upon as in a slightly servile job. During the early months of adjustment when the weather was exceedingly warm, cooks complained of being overworked. They had to work long hours in front of a hot stove. Sufficient food was not delivered from the warehouse, especially during July and August. At such a time when complaints came to the cooks they were infuriated because of the strain under which they were working. This hard work, however, earned them a reputation for hard work and a status that would not have been accorded them if their work had been easier. Only the chief cook was receiving \$19.00 at first, but when the wage scale was changed in August (?), all cooks were uniformly raised to \$19.00. Outside workers had been induced to work with shorter hours, extra clothing, better food, but to the cooks higher status was extended. This rise in status has generally served to keep the cooks satisfied. In some messhalls they overstepped their bounds and tried to order other workers about, but these were probably exceptions.

#### B. Other Mess Workers

Of the other mess workers besides the cooks, the majority are usually young Niseis or Kibeiis. There are some exceptions, such as the janitors who are usually old



Isseis, and laundresses who are usually Issei women. Some of the waitresses and kitchen helpers are sometimes Issei women. On the whole the kitchen crew is dominated by Niseis who are relatively young--from about 17 to 25. The dishwashers are usually boys, while the job of waiting on table is taken over largely by girls, but not wholly. Since high school children have started to go to school the position formerly filled by young people working in the messhall has been filled in many cases by Isseis. A ruling has been made by the Administration that all new mess workers must be women, as there was a shortage of men to work on the farm.

Messhall work has been relatively easy work, with short working hours and no hard work or skill or brain-work required. Since the mess workers worked only about two hours during meal time, they had the rest of the time free to attend classes or do whatever they pleased. This made the work desirable for girls who desired to attend classes in sewing, flower arrangement, flower making or other Adult Education classes which were held during the day and at night.

Despite the attractiveness of the job in terms of hours and work, it did not attract people with ability or ambition. In the first place, the job was of the unskilled sort which had always been considered a relatively low type of job. The term, waitress, especially, carried an



unrespectable connotation among Japanese. The concern for status which is a strong characteristic of Niseis, as it is the characteristic of all second generation groups in general, took the traditional form of seeking "white collar" work whenever they could. For this reason most Niseis with ambition preferred to work in the Ad Building as clerk or typists, in the hospital as Nurses' Aides, in the canteen as sales clerks. They considered their type of work and the way they dressed and the things they did more respectable than those of the messhall worker. While this attitude seems to be more common with girls, it holds true generally for both sexes.

As a result of the lower status of the messhall work, it has tended to draw certain types of Niseis. In the first place, Niseis with any amount of intellectual interest usually are not found in the messhall. For the boys who do not like "white collar" work, there are jobs on the farm, in the construction division, in the motor pool, Fire Department and the warden force. For the girls who do not like "white collar" work, the messhall is about the only other work they can turn to. Many of the girls are from the country and have done no other type of work except work around the home and in the fields, and consequently find themselves able to accept only work in the messhall. The general characteristics of these people are the lack of refined ways which Niseis seeking



"white collar" work attempt to maintain and a narrow range of interest especially in the intellectual sphere. To a large extent the latter is true of a large number of Niseis, but especially true of messhall workers.

The boys are likely to be at an awkward age when they are most interested in girls and dances, but have not learned the refined ways which make it possible to approach girls without frightening them away. Awkward manners and dirty jeans often characterize these boys. The boys may crack jokes among themselves and consider it funny, but Niseis usually will not do this in front of a girl. The Isseis and Kibeis working in the messhall are likely to talk in vague but erotic terms, irritating the girls or making them laugh. The interest of the Niseis is centered around sports, popular music, dances and the opposite sex. To a large degree they have taken up American ways. Most of the girls, for instance, wear their hair cut short and with a permanent wave. When the people dance they are likely to prefer jitter-bug to smooth dancing or dance only awkwardly. The girls tend to giggle too much and secretly crave attention from boys, which is probably natural of a group of adolescents. These people usually talk a great deal and claim that they have a great deal of fun working in the mess-hall.

Another type of Nisei which the messhall tends to attract is the quiet type who has attempted to adjust himself to the ways of his parents. This is especially true of girls who have accepted the parent's conception of the role of a girl as one interested in sewing, cooking, and other domestic arts. For one thing, many girls of this



sort have not been ambitious enough to strive for white collar work, to develop intellectual interests, or attempt to maintain refined social ways. Many of them probably had no qualification or desire to do other than messhall work. The fact that this work gave them an opportunity to attend sewing and other classes which their parents wanted them to attend, made this work more attractive. Some girls who were enjoying their work in the hospital were forced by their parents to accept messhall work so that they could attend classes.

These people were usually more reserved, less open with the opposite sex, and talked less. They were much more likely to be Buddhists than Christians. Their mannerisms tended to be more Japanese than those of other Niseis. They usually spoke better Japanese and poorer English than the others.

Another category which the messhall attracted was the Kibeis. They are not a type, but a culturally isolated group of second generation Japanese. The fact that a large proportion of them are working in the messhall is probably due to the fact that they find it difficult to find suitable employment elsewhere. Positions requiring the use of the English tongue are usually closed to them. Many boys probably found employment on the farm. A handful of Kibeis were on the warden force but after finding themselves unable to get along with the Niseis, many of them left for the beetfield. Some kitchen crews have been made up entirely of Kibeis, such as the one involved in the Imazeki Battery Case. At best their relation with other Niseis is only tolerable. They often find much in common with the extremely quiet type of Nisei who also find themselves out of stride with other Niseis. Some Niseis even find it easier to get along with Kibeis than with Niseis.



Thus we find that the type of job and the relative low status of the job have tended to draw workers of a certain sort to the mess-hall. In terms of social stratification they can be placed on a relatively low level. They do not maintain the status ways which give prestige to the group. In terms of acculturation most of them are likely to be conservative or backward. In terms of adjustment they tend to be submissive to parent ways. The large proportion of Kibeis is also another characteristic of the workers in the messhall.

## V. CONFLICTS

Some indication has been made of the frequency and type conflicts that have occurred in the mess division. In this section the conflicts will be analyzed a little more thoroughly to bring out some of the factors which caused the conflicts. First an analysis will be made of the possible causes of conflicts and their relative importance. This will be followed by an account of the activities of Kintaro Takeda in his work to settle messhall conflicts. Finally, a detailed account of the ousting of Pilcher, including the mess slow-up strike, will be given, bringing out the relationship between Japanese and Caucasians.

### A. Causes of Mess Conflicts

An analysis of mess conflicts reported in the block manager's reports reveal the following main causes:

1. Food shortage
2. Trouble among the mess workers
3. Complaints from block people
4. Poor distribution of food
5. Desire to put in own block workers
6. Misunderstanding over employment policy
7. Relation with Caucasians



The relative importance of these factors in causing conflicts is difficult to determine, but they seem to follow in the above order of importance, except for the relation with Caucasians, which is probably among the more important reasons for conflict. This seems to be true when it is considered that the attitude of Caucasian heads figured largely in the farm strike and was the main basis for the slow-up strike. Each of these causes will be discussed in order.

#### 1. Food Shortage

Food shortage has been the chief source of complaints and the main cause for the farm strike on August 15 and was also listed as one of the complaints made at the time of the slow-up strike on October 12. From the very beginning there has been complaints of food shortage. The Block Manager of Block 4 reports on June 15 that the cook is having difficulty preparing meals. On July 2 the Block Manager of Block 28 writes: "Our chief cook complains that food supply is very low. We went after food in order to have something to eat for the mess meal." Complaints of the shortage of food, however, became acute and general beginning early in August and extending into the middle of August when the farm strike resulted in the securing of an emergency purchase order, and purchasing of more food locally to relieve the situation. Since then the complaint of food shortage decreased in intensity. The complaint at the time of the slow-up strike that only thirty-nine cents was being spent for food when forty-five cents was promised indicates that dissatisfaction on this score still existed at the time. During November complaints against food shortage seem to have been reduced to a minimum.

At the time of the food shortage, chief cooks complained that



they were unable to cook decent meals. In many cases they were required to cook meat and vegetables together because the supply, especially of meat, was limited. This in turn caused complaints from the clock people. Some of the mess crew were suspected of taking food home from the kitchen, although it was not actually true. In one block where this was true (block 26), an effort was made to take out the chief cook and his crew. When in some blocks the people formed a committee to present complaints to the cooking staff, the crew threatened to resign as they did not feel responsible for the shortage of food.

## 2. Trouble Among Mess Workers

In many organizations there is usually some bickering going on among the workers. This is especially true when the head or those in responsible positions are not able to handle their job and men below them adequately. Such poor relationship among workers has been one of the major causes of a small irritating trouble within the mess-hall and occasionally these have ended up in an open split among the workers and situations where one side was forced to quit their jobs.

When the choice of the chief cook was poor there was most likely to be internal trouble. One crew complained that the chief cook was too young--32 years old, but since kitchens have been running smoothly with younger chief cooks than that, it is a sign of poor management on the part of the chief cook. In another mess-hall the waitress crew threatened to quit because the chief cook "overstepped his bounds," but in this case everything was settled. In another block the chief cook tried not only to control the kitchen, but also the whole block. In another



the block manager suggested that the chief cook not be given full control over the messhall because some of them were not good managers. In one block the cause for trouble between cooks and waiters was the fact that no one seemed to know who was the head of the messhall--the senior steward or the chief cook.

A comparison of Block 26 and Block 25 messhalls shows the important part played by the chief cook in maintaining order. Both of the cooks of these messhalls had been working with a kitchen crew in Walerga, and they had been selected as cooks before they arrived in Tule Lake. The chief cook of mess 26 was a Hawaiian second generation (?) in his 30's. From the reports that were circulated about him, he seems to have lacked integrity of character. In the first place, he allowed his crew to consume more than their share of food. When there was not enough of a certain food delivered to the messhall to serve to the people, he allowed the crew to consume it all. This was true of fruits, for instance, which arrived at one time in quantity sufficient for only half of the people. It was also difficult to find a way in which a leg or two of ham could be served to 200 people, and it was reported that such food never appeared on the table. The chief cook showed special favors to his crew, such as by making lemon pies for them.<sup>1</sup> Stories were circulated that some worker was caught taking home a piece of meat under his apron. During the farm strike, just as everything seemed to be settled a few cooks complained that they did not have enough food for the next morning. The leader asked which of the messhalls did not have sufficient food. He promised that he would go and get the food for them even if it was necessary to make the Administration Officials

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go buy it because the people had been promised sufficient food. The chief cook from block 26 came forward and said that he did not have enough food, such as eggs for instance. The leader said that he would go and check up on the stock. The chief cook seemed embarrassed and faltering said that there will be some eggs on hand, but he's had to save up that supply for days in order to be able to serve it at all. Clearly he was out to grab as much food as he could get. It was later rumored by some people in his block that he had sent someone back to the messhall, probably in order to conceal what surplus food he had.

Only two or three other blocks said that they did not have sufficient food for the next day.

The block people did not try to conceal their antagonism toward the chief cook and openly admitted that their block was probably one of the worst in camp. On July 7, the hostility became quite open. The kitchen crew threatened to walk out just to show the people that a trained crew was necessary to run a kitchen. The incident ended up in a fight, however, and it was necessary to call the wardens in to settle the dispute. Evidently the block people had asked that the cooks stick to the menu in order to insure that they were not being cheated out of food. The cooks said that this could not be done because the warehouse did not send sufficient food. But the basic trouble seems to be the poor character of the chief cook, who, because of lack of integrity could not satisfy the block people. Since this incident trouble has occurred in Block 26 again and the people are still not satisfied. This will probably continue as long as the root of the trouble is not removed.



In comparison Mess 25 has never had any trouble, even during the food shortage period. The cooking has not always been superbly good, but it has been tolerable. The block people have been assured that the chief cook is doing all he can to give the best service he can manage. The chief cook is an Issei in his 40's very strict, but with a sense of fair play. He does not allow the mess workers to take any food home or eat more than their share of food. Realizing that if the mess workers ate before the block workers they would eat more than their share of the food, he has made it a rule for them to eat after the block people.

While he has been very strict even to the crew, he has had no trouble among them. It is his ability to manage the messhall honestly and to manage it well that has kept trouble out of his messhall.

Thus we see the important role played by the chief cook in keeping order among the workers and also good relations with the block people. This applies to other departments as well--the harmony and the efficiency of a department depends on the ability of the men in key positions.

There have been many sorts of internal troubles. In one messhall there was trouble between the dishwashers and waiters and waitresses, which was settled by the block people. In another the cooks were in disagreement, and the matter settled by having to differ cooking crews. In another a petition was circulated to remove certain workers. The petition was stopped and the block leaders attempted to solve the problem. The chief cook and his assistants were asked to resign and the situation was settled. In another the ward supervisor was



blamed for causing trouble. In Block 6 a fight broke out when an inspector attempted to confiscate some excess food in the pantry. Sectionalism entered into the picture as the block was populated largely with people from Clarksburg and the inspector happened to be someone from the northwest.

Some insight into the nature of internal conflicts in the messhall is presented by Mr. Taketa, who has been handling messhall complaints as a member of the Fair Practice Committee. He lists several situations which have led to internal conflict. The first situation is where farmers and construction workers are desirous of finding an opening in the messhall because they know that they will not be able to work much longer outside. The scarcity of outdoor work together with the increasing intensity of the cold make them desire an indoor job close to home. The second situation is where women within the block who have no employment but desire it are also seeking openings in the messhall. In both of these cases the dissatisfied person goes around telling other block people that so and so working in the messhall is very incompetent. In this way they created commotion, and are sometimes successful in removing a worker. The third situation is one in which a mess worker does not like a certain party in the block. As a result, the worker does not give this person as good service as he does to others. This infuriates the resident, and he goes around complaining to people in general about the unfair mess worker. The fourth situation is one in which the truck drivers and delivery boys demand extra food, such as apples, from the kitchen. Since very few extra apples are delivered to the messhall the kitchen can not afford



to be giving such hand-outs to every delivery crew. The delivery crew, in order to retaliate, goes to the block people, telling them that this morning so much of such and such a product was delivered, whereas actually one-half that amount was delivered by him. The block people are likely to believe the delivery boy and begin to suspect that the kitchen crew is pilfering food which rightly belongs to them.

Besides these four situations he cited another case which he handled recently. The chief cook showed favoritism to a young widow in the kitchen help crew. The widow in turn played up to the chief cook, and some people suspected an affair between them. Another married woman in the crew was honest and felt that the people were being robbed of food which rightly belonged to them. The chief cook wanting to get rid of the married woman because she got in his way told block people false stories about her incompetence. Things became so unbearable for her that she appealed for help from Mr. Taketa. He was unable to patch up the situation and the woman was finally required to quit her job.

The nature of internal conflicts in the messhall is due generally not to the changed conditions within the Project but to personality factors which have always operated to cause disagreements, cliques, jealousies even on the outside.

### 3. Complaints from Block People.

As has already been indicated dissatisfaction with the messhall among the block people has been rather general. The food shortage has caused a great deal of grumbling among the people. Where the chief cook has taken pains to gain the confidence of the people, however, and where he has explained that there was a shortage of food, the complaints have not been so great. Poor preparation of food has been dif-



ficult to excuse, and has been a major source of complaint from the block people. In one messhall it was necessary to call in the chief cook from another messhall as advisor in order to have the quality of the food improved. Mismanagement by the chief cook and pilfering on the part of the kitchen crew has been the cause for many complaints, and one which has resulted in attempts to remove the cooks or the entire crew. As was indicated in the previous section, some of the complaints circulated among the block people have been motivated by a desire for personal gain or by personal grudge, and have not always been justified.

#### 4. Poor Distribution of Food

Some blocks have a larger population than others and at the time of the food shortage there was a general belief that food was being distributed equally to all messhalls, which was felt to be very unfair. While a rough scale was made for distributing such food as sugar, for instance, it seems to have been true that the distribution of food was not strictly in proportion to the population in that block. This was finally remedied in September, and since then this has not caused much trouble. The source of the trouble here lies with the lack of foresight on the part of the mess management heads. It speaks poorly for the adaptability of those in charge of the distribution of food that this source of complaint was not remedied earlier.

#### 5. Desire to Put in Own Block Workers

In blocks where the kitchen crew came largely from some other block, unfavorably there were complaints that they should be replaced with people in the block. One block manager aptly sums up the reasons for such a change pointing out the reasons for not wanting to retain workers from other blocks:



Excessive mouths to feed.

Workers' friends brought to the messhall to eat.

Poor preparation of food.

Poor service by waitresses.

Two reasons seem to stand out above others: There are excessive mouths to feed and the quality of work is bound to be poorer than when people from the block are employed. The first complaint was especially important when there was a food shortage and distribution of food was thought to be equal to all blocks regardless of population. At the present time, however, this does not serve as an excuse because food is distributed accordingly to daily head counts. It is difficult to determine how true the second charge is. While it is plausible still it is not an imperative reason for firing one crew and putting in another. It is more likely that a feeling of sectionalism enters into the picture to a large extent. With outside workers hostile attitudes on the part of block people resulting from dissatisfaction of the preparation of the food or service given by the waitresses are likely to be intensified. It is possible that such outside workers will also take a similar attitude and not feel as responsible in giving the people better service. One other factor that should not be overlooked is the desire for jobs by people in the block. If Mr. Taketa's insights are correct, this is an underlying motive which plays a significant part in people in the block attempting to oust workers from the mess crew. That this should be directed in a wholesale manner against all outside workers is only natural. In some blocks a compromise solution has been worked out whereby new openings would be filled with block people only.

#### 6. Employment Policy

A few of the conflicts have been considered by a lack of under-



standing of the authority delegated to certain key men. One block manager did not believe that the chief cook had the right to hire and fire workers as he claimed he had. Some block managers felt that where the chief cook was not competent he should not be allowed to take complete charge of the messhall. In some cases the senior steward struggled with the chief cook for the control of the messhall. In one block there were complaints from the block manager and the chief cook because the food inspector was hired without consulting either of them. In any relation between workers of the same organization lack of clear-cut understanding of the line of authority and division of labor is potential cause of conflicts. In the messhall conflicts we find this to be true, too.

#### 7. Relationship with Caucasians

The sense of insecurity and dissatisfaction resulting from the extreme centralization of mess activity, taking the control over food entirely out of the hands of the block residents, have been intensified by the presence of Caucasians at the top of the hierarchy of authority. This has meant leaving this important matter of food up to Caucasians whom most Japanese felt could not be trusted without good reasons. Two factors seemed to complicate the relationship. One was the feeling of suspicion that the Japanese had toward Caucasians. Many Japanese felt that Caucasians were full of graft, and could be expected to make profit for themselves from the food which was supposed to go to colonists. Perhaps this was partly due to a projection of the inclination of some Japanese to do the same thing. The other factor was the Japanese's sensitivity to his own skin color.

The evacuation, most Japanese were convinced, was wholly dis-



crimatory. They felt that all Caucasians were more or less responsible for the present treatment of the Japanese. This mixed feeling of antagonism and inferiority tended to create a gulf between the Japanese and the Caucasians.

The Caucasians on their part were likely to approach the Japanese with a condescending attitude. Many of them could only think of Japanese as generally an inferior race. Coupled with this was a difference in point of view, which resulted in lack of sympathy with the Japanese people. The Japanese, after all, were being supported by the Government and were not working very hard. They were receiving relatively good food, when there was a shortage of food on the outside. They were doing nothing to help the war effort when thousands of Americans were dying on the battlefield. The clamors from the Japanese for decent food often seemed excessive to the Caucasians. Along with this feeling was a suspicion that the Japanese were trying to get as much as they could get from the government. There was also a suspicion that pilfering was going on among the Japanese in key positions, which warranted a strict check-up.

Mr. Cooke, the head of the transportation and supply division, maintained relative smooth relations with the Japanese. He had been in Japan for a number of years, and claimed to know the Japanese people. He took a condescending attitude, however, toward the Japanese. He was also not very open and frank, and the Japanese people did not feel that he could be trusted at all. Mr. Stults, the first Project Steward, was willing to listen to the complaints of the Japanese people and do all he could to remedy any situation. He did not stay on the Project very long as he was transferred to another relocation



center. He was replaced by Mr. Pilcher, who had already made himself unpopular with the Japanese people in Walerga. His attitude toward the Japanese was very arrogant, telling them that if they did not like the way things were being run the army would be asked to step in and enforce things. Mr. Douglas had charged Mr. Taketa, who was trying to get the full forty-five cents worth of food that was promised to the people among other things, as being a "communist." Even Mr. Shirrell tried to intimidate Mr. Taketa by telling him that he was an agitator and that he would be handed over to the F.B.I. Thus we can get a glimpse of the condescending attitude, the lack of sympathy and the suspicion with which the Japanese were regarded by the Caucasian heads.

Of the other causes of mess conflict, the poor distribution of food and the food shortage can be considered largely the responsibility of the Caucasian heads. Besides these, the farm strike was precipitated by the presence of Mr. Pilcher as Assistant Project Steward. Upon his arrival in the Project toward the end of July, he had announced that he would put into effect his Walerga system. Mr. Taketa feels that the farm strike would not have taken place if the Caucasian heads had been sympathetic, had explained the reason for the food shortage, and promised to do all they could to remedy the situation. The general unsympathetic attitude of the Caucasians, especially the arrogant manner in which Mr. Pilcher handled the situation, convinced the Japanese people that the only way they could hope for an improvement in condition was through fighting.

The move to oust Pilcher which ended up in the slow-up strike in October is directly traceable to the relation of one Caucasian



with the Japanese people. It also brings out the unsympathetic attitude taken by Mr. Shirrell and others, which did not help to solve the problem earlier without resorting to a strike. During this time only Mr. Elberson, the labor relation man for the Administration, was sympathetic to the Japanese people and helped to bring the strike to a close quickly. As the whole move to oust Pilcher brings out clearly some of the Caucasian-Japanese relationship, it will be followed more in detail.

#### Ousting of Pilcher

At the time of the farm strike there was a general demand to have Mr. Pilcher removed. His "Walerga System" gave the people from Walerga an idea of his methods and also his attitude toward the Japanese people. He seems to have no sympathy for the the Japanese at all. Threatening that he would call in the army if they did not like the way he did things. However, since Mr. Shirrell was in San Francisco at the time, it was decided that Mr. Pilcher would be given a trial. If he proved unsatisfactory Mr. Shirrell would be asked to remove him.

Except for a few days (before or after the strike?) the "Walerga system" was never put into effect. Mr. Pilcher, however, continued to take an antagonistic attitude toward the Japanese and did not try to satisfy the demands they made. Seeing that it was hopeless to get any favorable response from him, the Mess Advisory Council finally decided to circulate a petition to have him removed. This petition was circulated in each messhall and the people asked to sign it. In most cases the signatures were gotten without a thorough explanation of the charges against Mr. Pilcher. In this manner 9,000 signatures were obtained. This was presented at a Council



meeting and to Mr. Shirrell who was present at this meeting.

The minutes read:

"Mr. Kintaro Taketa, representing the mess employees on the Fair Practice Committee, was introduced by Mr. Nikaido and given the floor. Due to his difficulty in expressing his views in English, the Council asked Mr. Noboru Honda to aid in the translation for the benefit of Mr. Shirrell and Mr. Peck. Since July, after Mr. Pilcher took office here, the food distribution to messhalls created criticism from mess employees. During a meeting of all messhall representatives the opinion of the group was in favor of Mr. Pilcher's discharge, but with hopes of settling the existing difficulties amicably, further action was postponed. Recently new incidents arose aggravating the feelings of the mess staff. The attitude of Mr. Pilcher and his Caucasian assistance was felt entirely disagreeable, demanding employees to follow specific instructions. The alternative of having military authorities enforcing instructions, and the labeling of Mr. Taketa as a Communist, and similar actions brought the situation to a point demanding action. At a mess employee mass meeting, Friday, a petition favoring the discharge of Mr. Pilcher was requested to be drawn and distributed to each messhall. These petitions carrying approximately 9,000 signatures was on hand this evening for the Council's approval.

"Suggested that the Council go on record to request Mr. Shirrell to release Mr. Pilcher, but Mr. Shirrell commented that although Mr. Pilcher does lack tact a more definite justification is necessary. Mr. Shirrell suggested that this matter be studied by the Merit Board. Speaking on behalf of the Merit Board Mr. Fukuyama stated that the Merit Board voluntarily took into discussion this matter inasmuch as



the Fair Practice Committee was not organized completely.

"Motion moved that the Council approve the forwarding of the petition to Mr. Shirrell. Seconded and carried."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Shirrell maintained that charges must be brought against Mr. Pilcher before any action could be taken. Mr. Taketa, therefore, took this matter up with the Fair Practice Committee and the Merit Board. But he did not receive a sympathetic response from Mr. Shirrell. The latter maintained that since Mr. Pilcher was a Civil Service employee he himself could not do very much about this matter, except to hear the charges (the Project Director's right to discharge a Caucasian staff member should be verified). In fact Mr. Shirrell intimidated Mr. Taketa by telling him that he was an agitator and that as such he was going to be turned over to the F.B.I. for investigation. According to Mr. Taketa Mr. Shirrell was willing to talk the matter over when Mr. Taketa told Mr. Shirrell that he was willing to go to jail if Mr. Shirrell would take care of his wife and children and see to it that the people are properly fed.

The investigation by the Fair Practice Committee did not proceed very smoothly. There was a feeling on the part of the members on the Committee that the Caucasians were insincere and were not taking the committee seriously. Specific charges against Mr. Pilcher were brought up, meetings were held and witnesses called in, but the Committee seemed to make very little progress in its attempt to get any result from the Administration. Mr. Shirrell de-

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<sup>1</sup>CM 9/22/42

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clared that a Caucasian staff member must be investigated by a Caucasian committee, and he appointed a special mess investigating committee consisting of Fagan, Fred L. Conner, and Paul Fleming. The Fair Practice Committee was disgusted because it was powerless to do anything. Some members on the Committee felt that it was better to dissolve the committee if it were not going to have the power to do anything.

The investigating committee of three held a meeting on September 30 to hear testimonys . On October 1, another meeting was held in Mr. Pilcher's office to seek evidence. On October 2, a final meeting was held to draw up recommendations based on the testimony and evidence. The report of the investigating committee went into the details of the charges which were concerned mainly with the unfair distribution of food. The conclusion of the committee was as follows:

"The committee feels that Mr. Pilcher understands his business thoroughly and has earnestly tried to manage distribution of food; that he has not, however, been always alert to see that mistakes are corrected; and that explanations as to the reasons for quotas have not always been given. Also, that he has not at all times been tactful with the members of the mess crew, particularly when complaints were presented."

"It should be noted that Mr. Pilcher has worked under conditions of very severe overload, particularly during the period from September 11 to September 28, in which time he was the only staff member concerned with mess problems on the Project. It was during this period that most of the complaints arose."1

1T. D. 10/8/42



The report of the investigating committee seemed fair enough, except for the fact that it did not take into serious consideration the fact that 9,000 people had signed a petition to have Mr. Pilcher discharged. Mr. Taketa and the Fair Practice Committee were left with the feeling that they were helpless to do anything about this matter. A meeting of the Mess Advisory Council was called to plan for future action. It was felt that more extreme action was necessary in order to get results. One suggestion was to take the matter up to the Regional Office. Another was to go on a strike.

A meeting of representatives from all messhalls was called and the various plans presented. It was decided finally that the charges would be filed with the Regional Office and that at the same time all of the messhalls would go on a strike. A slow-up strike was planned to inable the colonists to eat, but which still obstructed the work of the community. Meal time was shifted one or two hours later than the regular time so that workers would not be able to go to work on time. Children, however, were to be given special consideration and be allowed to eat to get to school on time. The meeting was ruled by emotion, and persons who made suggestions contrary to the usual of the majority were either shouted down or threatened with violence. Taking the law into one's own hands, along with pilfering seem to be characteristic features of camp life.

The reasons for the slow-up strike were:

1. Insufficient food. Forty-five cents was not being spent on food.
2. Mr. Pilcher should be removed from his job.
3. Clothing should be issued to mess workers.
4. Back pay checks should be issued immediately.

The main issue, however, seemed to be the removal of Pilcher



from the staff. The strike was instituted, unlike the farm strike, after Mr. Shirrell had been approached through the proper channels. Underlying both strikes seems to be a feeling of helplessness and injustices suffered.

On October 12, the slow-up strike was instituted without very much fuss. Meal time was changed to 8:30, 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. In some messhalls the time was still later, or was made indefinite. Workers went to work late, quit at noon and came back to work late again. In signing up for their time, many workers still continued to put on eight hours on the time sheet. Timekeepers were confused because they did not know whether the workers should be expected to put on only the actual number of hours they worked or the full eight hours. The result of the slow-up strike was immediate. Mr. Pilcher handed in his resignation, but Mr. Shirrell refused to accept it immediately.

Because of the strike many of the farmers and the construction crew refused to go to work. Mr. Kallam reported to Mr. Shirrell that the farmers refused to go to work, and Mr. Shirrell ordered that no trucks be sent to take the older people out to the farms, and only the high school children, who were working on the farm at this time, be allowed to go out to work. A curious situation was developed where the children went out to work while their parents idled around at home. Mr. Taketa made arrangements for the following day so that lunches would not be prepared for the farm workers, thus preventing even the high school students from going to work.

The following day the negotiating committee for the mess workers, headed by Mr. Taketa, were called in by Mr. Shirrell for a conference. Mr. Shirrell took an indignant stand on the action taken by the mess workers saying that the mess crew were on the same plane as the CIO



or the I.W.W. and that forcing Mr. Pilcher to resign was very unfair. He also stated that this strike was the work of a dozen or so agitators whose loyalty would be checked upon by the F.B.I. However, he conceded most of the demands made by the mess workers. The full forty-five cents worth of food was promised. Mr. Pilcher's resignation was accepted. Orders for clothing for mess workers had been placed already. There was nothing that could be done about the paychecks. At the same time, Mr. Shirrell threatened that if the mess workers did not go back to work in the morning they would be relieved of their jobs. The minutes of this meeting are reproduced in full here because they were written up in a way to bring out clearly Mr. Shirrell's attitude toward the upset in the mess schedule.

Messhall Committee Report

by Kengo Nogaki

October 13, 1942  
10:30 a.m.

Mr. Shirrell called in the committee of mess workers who had been appointed to negotiate with him for settlement of the recent mess difficulties. Mr. Shirrell had been acquainted with the grievances of the mess crews as a result of an interview by Mr. Elberson with Mr. Kintaro Takeda. He started the meeting by making it very clear to the committee that he was angry, "very, very angry with any group of people who would deliberately upset every plan and work schedule in the project with such a clever plan." That the plan was very cleverly conceived by a man far smarter than Mr. Shirrell himself. However, the organization of this plan put the mess crews on a plane with the CIO or the IWW.

After a thorough discourse on his reasons for displeasure with the mess crews for this display of unreasonable impatience, Mr. Shirrell stated that the FBI would be called in on this case,



that the FBI would be asked to check on the loyalty of each and every Issei and Nisei citizen in the project; that any disloyal persons found in the project would be sent elsewhere "so fast that they won't have a chance to pick up a toothbrush."

He also brought up the point that all such strikes and unpleasant incidents such as this were played up prominently in the Tulean Weekly, and such publicity would reflect adversely upon the colonists here at Tule Lake and cause many outsiders to lose all sympathy with us who are confined at this and other projects of the WRA.

He next brought up the subject of the discharge of Mr. Pilcher which was indirectly brought about by a petition made up and signed by approximately 9,000 colonists at the Tule Lake project who had grievances against Mr. Pilcher in connection with his handling of the mess personnel and the distribution of food. In Mr. Shirrell's words, "Mr. Pilcher was the best steward ever in this camp. In violation of all laws of fair play, I was forced to allow Mr. Pilcher to hand in his resignation." Mr. Shirrell was highly incensed over Mr. Pilcher's resignation. However, when it was brought to his attention that Mr. Pilcher was the center of trouble at the Walerga reception center, he stated that he "never would have allowed Mr. Pilcher to come here if he had known about Mr. Pilcher's trouble at Walerga." However, at the time of Mr. Pilcher's acceptance as project steward at Tule Lake, the personnel here was desperately in need of a steward and because Mr. Pilcher had been transferred to Salinas and his application had been made from there, he was accepted and commenced work here. If a petition can fire Mr. Pilcher, such a petition signed tomorrow could cause the discharge of Mr. Elberson. He also added as a final statement that he "would not blame Mr. Pilcher if he traveled around the



country making speeches against the Japanese evacuees. I hope he does."

In answer to the mess crew's first request, that the full WRA allotment of 45 cents would be expended in an effort to right the almost unbearable situation arising in the messhalls for lack of sufficient supplies, Mr. Cooke stated that menus were received from San Francisco and upon being checked, it was seen to be unsatisfactory because many items on the menu were not available on the market. However, he promised that the full 45 cents would be spent but that because of the nationwide food rationing program now going into effect, we would eat less meat. Mr. Shirrell stated that we would have only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  pounds of meat per person per week, and later it would be down to 2 pounds per week. He also stated that it would be necessary for us to eat more macaroni and pork and beans that we had ever eaten before. All food commodities now in the country would be commandeered on January first.

The second of the mess crew's requests was answered fully by Mr. Pilcher's resignation for his post as Project Steward.

The third issue to be settled by the committee was the matter of clothing issue for the messhall workers. Mr. Shirrell stated that despite the WRA's many efforts to secure uniforms for mess workers, they were "met with a stone wall everywhere." Bids from manufacturers had been accepted and orders placed but the manufacturers would fail to fill such orders because the army had priority. However, 3 bids had been submitted, one each from Sears, Roebuck and Company, Montgomery Ward, and J. C. Penny of Klamath Falls and that immediately after the termination of the meeting, Mr. Cooke was to go to Klamath Falls to make certain whether the orders were being filled. Every effort was being made to secure the uniforms for the mess workers and 2,400 each of men's aprons, coats, and pants had been ordered. Also on the same order were 1,200 each of men's caps and shoes. 1,750



ladies' uniforms are "on the rail now" and their arrival depended upon transportation.

Fourth on the list of requests was a discussion of delayed pay issues. Mr. Shirrell's answer was, "I have no influence with the treasury department" and due to the fact that the army, and navy, and 400,000 civilian workers had to be paid, the treasury department was unfortunately, behind in their payments but that the checks were certain to come soon.

Asked about the mackinaws in the warehouse and the possibility of their being issued to mess workers, Mr. Cooke explained that they were "surplus commodities from other governmental departments" and that it would be impossible to obtain any further supplies. Therefore, the 6,000 coats were to be saved for the use of outside workers.

After the discussion of the various subjects, Mr. Shirrell stated that this upset in mess schedules was the result of a dozen or so agitators within the confines of this camp whose loyalties would be checked upon by the F.B.I. He said that he wished that all such persons might be sent to Japan that "they might be drafted into the Japanese Army and shot with American bullets by American soldiers."

Upon being informed that a meeting of the messhall representatives would be held to receive their decision, Mr. Shirrell asked that Mr. Cooke and Mr. Elberson be present at the meeting to explain his stand. He explained that he "was too mad" to be present. However, he made it clear that only one answer could come from the meeting and that was the decision of all the workers to return to work on schedule on the following morning. If such a decision was not made, all mess-



hall workers would be relieved of their duties and reassigned to other jobs. He closed by saying that this situation cast a "reflection on my ability as an administrator and upon my ability as a friend of the Japanese People." Troubles such as this would cause him to lose face with the staff and with himself.



On the afternoon of the same, a meeting of mess hall representatives was held in a mess hall to decide whether the strike should be terminated or not. Mr. Takeda made a report on the progress of the negotiations. Mr. Cooke and Mr. Elberson, the labor relation man, represented Mr. Shirrell at the meeting. Most of the questions were directed at Mr. Cooke, who gave sugar-coated answers. He kept repeating that everything would be done to satisfy the colonists if only they would go back to work in the morning. The mess workers seemed to be satisfied with the progress of the negotiations. Their demands were met as far as it could be. There was some dissatisfaction because of some of the things Mr. Shirrell had said. Mr. Cooke was asked whether it was true that Mr. Shirrell had really said that if the crew did not go back to work in the morning it would be fired. Mr. Cooke stated that Mr. Shirrell said that he was in a mood to do that. He was also asked whether the farmers who went on a strike would be allowed to go back to work, since Mr. Shirrell had ordered that no farm workerw be taken out to work. Mr. Cooke replied that he did not know very much about the matter, but was sure that if the cooks went back to work the farmers would go back to work too. He said that he would do his best. It is clear that Mr. Shirrell could have treated the negotiating committee more diplomatically.

While Mr. Cooke was trying to cover Mr. Shirrell's irritating out-bursts, Mr. Elberson put himself more on the side of the people. He said that if Mr. Takeda were investigated by the F.B.I. he would back him up because he felt that Mr. Takeda was a valuable man in labor relations and not an agitator. Someone brought up the fact that Mr. Hoover and Mr. Douglas called Mr. Takeda such names as Communist. Mr. Elberson replied:

"I am charged with labor relation, but 90% of my work is training the Caucasian staff. I have to get them to take an intelligent attitude toward the people they are getting to work for them." It seems to be the lack of sympathetic attitude of this sort that has been the basis of much of the Caucasian staff and the colonists. Both the farm strike and the mess hall



strike can be traced largely to a lack of this sympathetic attitude toward the Japanese people.

Several mess hall workers declared that they should be allowed to have the mackinaws which were in the warehouse. One said that he couldn't go back to the people without some sort of gift, even though most of the demands had been met. Another said that the mess workers didn't want to have it said of them that they had gone <sup>on</sup> a strike and had gotten so little for their trouble. This desire on the part of the people to demand all they could get even if it were unreasonable was evident at this meeting. Perhaps it is a characteristic of weaker people when they are in a position to negotiate with a stronger group, since a similar attitude is observable in the demands made by Labor when negotiating with employers. At the meeting it was finally decided that work would not be resumed normally until the mackinaws were issued to the mess workers.<sup>1</sup>

The negotiating committee, however, worked out plans with the Administration whereby mess workers would receive warm clothing soon, and the slow-up strike was called off that night. The distribution of warm clothing was begun soon after, not only to mess hall workers, but to all workers who had not already received them.

Mr. Shirrell's remark to the Council that same night is worth quoting here:

"We lost two valuable days because of unsubordinate cooks. I'm in the hottest spot I have been in. My staff is certain that I have deserted them. I have thrown out a man who is doing his best. It was the humiliating thing I have had to do. I wouldn't blame Mr. Pilcher if he said how unfair I and the Japanese people in Tule Lake were to him. We are needlessly cruel. My staff believes that he will be next target, that I will do the same with them.

"These are very dangerous times for the Japanese people. Such conduct day by day puts just one more plank on the bridge to Japan. If they want to go back,

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1. JSJ 10/13/42, Messhall Committee Report 10/13/42



let's have them go back now. I object to those few who make it possible for the rest to follow. There are a few people who should be in some other camp, and they are going as fast as I can find them. There are some people who make it impossible for people on the outside to help you. The local newspaper carries an editorial against the Japanese people.

"This Council ought to bear this burden with me. This is a responsibility you can't dodge. This is your future, especially if you have children who are going to live in the United States. This is very discouraging. We should quit looking backward and look forward. I told you fellows that it is very serious. You are going to lose some of the staunchest friends among the staff. If you and we do not work together, it's going to be too bad. It's not the Army. They are only too glad to get out of here. The F.B.I. is next. It's going to be a long day before I break a man's spirit as I did today. He was trying his best."<sup>1</sup>

#### Mess Advisory Council and Kintaro Takeda

The Mess Advisory Council is made up of 7 representatives, one from each ward. They in turn are selected by representatives from each mess hall in the ward. This Council was set up in July (genesis and function unknown). At the time of the farm strike the Advisory Council drew up four demands which were to be presented to the Administration. They included:

1. Elimination of the Wallerger System
2. A balance sheet to show what food came into the warehouse and was sent out to the mess halls.
3. Putting the control of food entirely in the hands of Japanese

Presumably other important mess problems were discussed by the Advisory Council and taken up with the proper officials. The attempt to oust Pilcher shows the activeness of this Council.

The head of the Mess Advisory Council was a man named Kintaro Takeda. He



was formerly a fish dealer in Sacramento, but has always been interested in working with young people's groups and in taking care of social problems. He is still in his middle 30's and relatively young for an Issei. He speaks fairly good English, an ability which has enabled him to carry his negotiations with the Caucasian staff effectively. He has been working as the senior steward in Mess 29, but has been recently promoted as a special senior steward. His desire to take a leadership role in community affairs has led him to accept both the leadership in the Advisory Council and also the most active part in the Fair Practice/ Committee.

As a member of the Fair Practice Committee, Mr. Takeda has been called upon to solve many difficulties arising in mess halls. He spent much time in walking about the Project on food, seeing people, arranging meetings, forming committees, for the satisfaction of solving mess problems satisfactorily. He claims to have solved about 90% of the problems that were brought to his attention, and takes pride in the fact that he has usually been thanked by both parties in the quarrel for settling the problem fairly. His procedure is to go in and first hear both sides of the question thoroughly. Where the problem is between the block people and the mess hall, he arranges for a committee from both sides to set down and iron out matters. These committees make it possible for more peaceful negotiations, and also leave a channel through which further troubles can be taken care of before they become too great. All blocks have been encouraged to form such committees in order to prevent trouble and about 60% (?) of the blocks have such a committee at the present time, according to Mr. Takeda. When the committee is unable to settle the trouble, he himself goes in and tries to find the suitable solution, making it possible for a compromise, or have one side back down without losing face. At present, Mr. Takeda is the only one on the Fair Practice Committee who is active in solving personnel trouble.



### Analysis and Conclusion

A hypothesis that results from the study of mess activity is that the cause of major conflicts between colonists and the Administrative staff is the feeling of insecurity, helplessness, their injustices on the part of the colonists in the face of present conditions and unsympathetic response from Administrative officials. Threats of violence and general lawlessness seem to be a result of the same underlying feeling of insecurity. The fact that Japanese evacuees have taken up tactics commonly employed by labor unions, organizations which they have usually despised, leads one to question what characteristics the colonists and the labor union members have in common. A study of the organizational set-up of mess activities brings out clearly the general pattern of Administrative organization within the Project. First, there is an extreme centralization of control over many activities formerly controlled by individuals. At the top of this system of centralization are the Caucasians who have rights and privileges far exceeding those of the interned colonists. This split between the Japanese and the Caucasian staff added to the sense of insecurity on the part of the colonists. The levelling of social differences among the Japanese again have left the Japanese without means of maintaining self-respect by ordinary means available on the outside. This again probably contributed toward a feeling of unrest among the colonists, perhaps of resentment toward the Caucasian staff in the superior position.

More important than these, it seems, have been the attitudes of the Caucasians toward the evacuees. The lack of sympathy for the Japanese and an assumption of an air of superiority on the part of the Administrative staff seem to be a major source of friction. A comparison of the attitude taken by Mr. Shirrell or Mr. Pilcher and Mr. Elberson makes this very clear. Mr. Elberson has been rather sincere in his belief that he is here to help the Japanese people. While Mr. Shirrell has always voiced a desire to help the Japanese people, he has never been able to sympathize with them to the extent that Mr. Elberson has been



July 6, 1942

Marshall  
26 July

Mr. Stults' suggested that Jack and his helpers (kitchen) take a week's vacation on his time and let other folks take over. We should be fair to the chef since he may only be partly at fault.

Complainant wants to know definitely whether the rest of the crew were coming back to work in the morning or not.

It was suggested that it be put up to a vote whether Jack was wanted or not but since it would be unfair for him at this instant, it would be better to wait until the expiration of the week's vacation.

Nakayama's (head waiter) opinion is that crew got along swell with Jack, and therefore, should be loyal to him.

Jack's remark was "Speak up if you don't want me!"

Imura wanted to know definitely what was wrong with Jack. Source of trouble should be solved first. Mr. Stults' aforementioned statement would be the best solution and should be tried out.

Jack's statement was that there were not enough supplies in the kitchen. People were too greedy. He's sacrificing without pay. He confessed that his taste wasn't bad at all, and he only has salt and pepper to do with. No eggs to make hot-cakes. He said there were no materials to make pies with, no gas range, coal stoves weren't good enough. People should appreciate him because he was making a great sacrifice, cooking without pay and not enough supply. Thinks himself as fair, and that people weren't fair to him. He states lost 12 to 14 pounds in the heat and which he won't be able to gain back, and also went without eating many times, only people don't understand.

Someone commented that if there should be trouble like these, it should be brought out to him and not only among friends. After all, he's doing his best.

Exit, Jack, "Don't want to hear lectures."

Employees terminate their employment automatically if they don't show up for work in the morning.

Nakayama made a statement to the effect that people were trying to kick Jack out. Giving Jack 7 days' vacation was just like forcing him to resign.

According to Mr. Stults' knowledge, every mess is being supplied the same kind and equal amount of food, unless there be a slip somewhere unknown to him.

"It is understood that no one wants to hurt Jack's feeling and also wants to help this block at the same time. It is a case where Mac has to decide whether he should sacrifice the



people in this block or sacrifice Jack's friendship. If Jack was a broad-minded man, he won't want to impose upon Mac, after all he's receiving a vacation with pay and Mr. Stults is not firing him from his staff, so if Mac will talk things over with his crew and Jack, pacifying him into taking a more broader view point, you will be able to get the crew into working in the morning." Miura quote.

It was brought to everyone's attention that Jack didn't give the people a chance to talk it over. He delivered a speech at noon saying that if there were any complaints to make, just come up to him and he'll give you badly harm.

Nakayama and his crew objected to this statement, but there were enough evidence to prove that he had used the word "sei sai" which means to use force. To reinforce that he walked out with 10-15 mess workers and made a remark that he would cut them up with a knife (slaughter them).

It was stated at this time that Jack was that type of a man, very quick-tempered, and therefore he should be approached diplomatically. The argument was that he didn't give them a chance. Who would be able to approach Jack when he had said he would use bodily force if there were anyone willing to make a complaint.

It was brought out that there were no arguments with Jack as a person, but merely to quiet down the rumor that has been going around this block.

"As soon as I was made the block representative, I talked with many and I have nothing against Jack or you (Mac). I was elected by this block which had been ruled majority. When this thing came up, it was my duty as well as the block manager's, just like you are waiting in the mess, Mac. Since I don't know Jack very well, although I wanted to talk to him very nicely and diplomatically before things got bigger, but I wasn't able to do this. Tom had a talk with Jack. We're all sacrificing and the only joy everyone has at the present is eating, that's why we should be free and not be threatened like this. The only pleasure we have, we are doing it three times a day, and that is why we should talk things over. We're not telling Jack to get out of here. Personally, Jack is all right but it is the duty of the councilman, to see to it that this thing doesn't grow big. We want to be quiet and diplomatic. Tom talked with Jack quietly on the side and then at noon I wanted to talk with him why these complaints were coming, but Jack couldn't be approached." Block Representative quote.

Mess situation was brought up at barrack rep's. meeting. Nakayama thought this situation was settled then.

Rumor is not justified--such things as raiding the icebox, and no special privileges are accorded to the waiters. He did allow the cook's helpers to take home what was left over. This



was presented by one of the workers.

At this point Jack was willing to talk things over with the committee and iron things out. Mac offered to apologize for Jack but that couldn't be accepted.

The most fundamental cause is the very attitude of the cook himself. Substantiated by someone, he's handing out special privileges to kitchen crew. Menu official from warehouse for last night was spare ribs and something. And, what we got was rice and macaroni. What kind of an army menu is that? And, there was a complaint against this sort of a thing last night. Jack cut out certain piece of meat and made "teri-yaki" and passed it out to certain members of the crew. This person who got the special piece had put it in a can and by mistake stumbled over a rock and those juicy pieces of meat fell out on the ground, and in shame he covered it up with sand.

Cook's explanation of the spare rib was that there were only enough for few people. Only 100 and not enough to serve everyone, and this would be unfair to those who would not be able to get it.

All other messes get the same amount and they have managed somehow to serve spare rib to the people.

A motion was made to accept Mr. Stults' solution and if the crew failed to return at the end of their vacations, we'll have to get another crew.

"If the new cook didn't meet our requirements and if the people were willing to have Jack back, Jack would be given a chance to come back so it is not an unfair proposition." Ted Shigeno quote.

"We're not looking for a fight. We're only trying to improve what we eat and these fellows who are quiet, the block representative is not going to listen to you outside of this meeting. All those who cannot talk fluent English has come to me and have spoken to me personally." Miura.

Three solutions offered were:

1. Give Jack a vacation and have him return without taking a vote.
2. Give hima vacation and then take a vote whether we want him back or not.
3. Have a committee formed and talk it over with Jack and iron things out.

It was brought to our attention that if a new cook was to be tried out this week, enmity would arise.

Motion: I make a motion that an even body of complainants



and an even number of those loyal to Jack, that both partly or evenly represented, do talk the cause of this out and arrive at a solution.

It was asked that Mr. Stults preside. Committee represented should be able to speak both English and Japanese.

Would we be willing to abide with the result, should we take a vote on the three solutions offered?

The fairest point of view would be to have a special vote and everyone accept the verdict of the vote. Whatever the result, it will be accepted as fair to the kitchen and the eaters.

MOTION: ~~I make a motion that a committee is made and move~~ that these proposals be written out in both English and Japanese and be distributed to all of the occupants of this block (to all above 16) and this ballot be secret and be disposed of as quick as possible, by certain time in the block manager's office. Takahashi quote.

Would Jack be willing to cook for us until we decide this matter? Mr. Stults didn't think so.

MOTION: I make a motion that a committee is made and try to make a suitable solution and if Jack doesn't want to go by what the committee thinks and not even meet half the way, get a new cook and let Jack go. Regardless of whether Jack did right or wrong." Imura.

"Pros and cons have been aired and decided that vote would solve the only thing. Unfortunately as it is, I think this problem should be solved by a vote and if Jack isn't willing to wait until the result of the vote is known, then I think it is up to us to see whether the kitchen can be run by ourselves, since neither side will be contented unless a vote is taken." Takahashi quote.

It was finally decided that barrack representatives form a committee and talk it over with Jack since this could go on forever and a solution never reached. The meeting was transferred to the mess hall.

Shorthand transcription taken by  
a secretary for Howard Inaseki.



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October 13, 1942  
3:30 p.m.

Meeting was called to order by Mr. Kintaro Takeda and a brief review of Mr. Shirrel's meeting with the committee was made by Mr. Takeda. Before any further discussion was made, Mr. Cooke and Mr. Elbersen arrived to represent the administration. Mr. Cooke was introduced by the chairman and proceeded to explain that the August clothing script issue would begin as soon as Mr. Connor's department and the community enterprises were in complete readiness to handle the community's demands. He also stated that bids had been received from Montgomery Ward, Sears Roebuck, and J.C. Penney and that orders had been placed for 2400 aprons, 2400 coats, and 2400 pants, 1200 hats and 1200 shoes for the use of mess workers. Also 1750 ladies uniforms and 1000 pairs of shoes were on order and actually on rail now and their arrival depended only upon the transportation. He stated that the mackinaws in the warehouse might be distributed to mess workers by that he could not commit himself by making any definite statement or promise, and that a meeting was to be held with Mr. Hayes and Mr. Shirrel to see if the mackinaws could be distributed immediately to all mess workers.

Mr. Cooke clarified the food situation by explaining that the quota would be increased to a full 45 cents per person per day but that as requisitions were made to the QM corps 50 days ahead in Oakland, it would take a little time until the situation was completely readjusted. However, 35 days ago, a request had been placed with the QM corps in Oakland to increase the meat rations over and above any in the past and such increase should be noticeable on or about November fifth.

Mr. Cooke explained that Mr. Pilcher was no longer a part of the personnel as a result of his resignation.

Mr. Cooke was then asked what would be the status of the farm and construction crews who had walked out on jobs in sympathy with the mess workers and he replied that there would be no hard feelings on the part of the administrations against any divisions or members of those divisions and would like to have everyone back to work in the morning.

Mr. Cooke was next questioned concerning Mr. Shirrel's threat to terminate mess workers who refused to go back to work in the morning. He answered that no threat had been made but that in the heat of the discussion, Mr. Shirrel said that he would like to terminate all mess crews who refused to be reasonable.

Upon again being questioned concerning pay checks, Mr. Cooke answered that the Treasury had to issue checks to the army, the navy, and 400,000 civilian workers. Despite the fact that the methods may be slow, they are very "definite and now being speeded up."

Mr. Cooke was then asked about a statement made by Mr. Shir-



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rel in Mess 49 to the effect that checks for the month of August had already been made up and were at that time in Portland and should be here within a week. Mr. Cooke explained that this was probably a misunderstanding, resulting from some talk of issuing checks from Portland to speed up work.

Mr. Elberson was then introduced and stated that he hoped that the much talked of planning board would soon be set up and that its first problem would be an investigation of the mess problems. The importance of harmony in the mess halls to the Japanese people, both to "eaters and the workers" was stressed.

He also encouraged and emphasized his suggestion that regular meetings be held between the people eating in the messhalls and the messhall personnel so that information and suggestions could be passed back and forth from both sides. He stressed the importance of appointing a person to meet with the mess supervisor concerning suggestions of improvements in the mess halls.

Mr. Elberson repeated the statement that the clothing allowance scrip would be handled here through the community enterprises. The office was preparing for the issue and when all was in readiness, the Block Managers would be informed that the clothing issue would go ahead.

Mr. Cooke was then questioned concerning the reason for the 39 cent food allowance for September when the WRA allotment was 45 cents. He stated that he had been under the impression that the food had been costing about 45 cents but that the final check up had revealed that the cost had been only 39 cents. He reassured the representatives that they would receive a full 45 cents hereafter.

When questioned concerning Mr. Shirrel's refusal to let the farmers go to work this morning, Mr. Cooke stated that Mr. Callum the farm superintendent had reported that the farmers had refused to work. Therefore, Mr. Shirrel had ordered no trucks to take farmers to work and requested high school students to go to the farm. Concerning stories that Mr. Shirrel had threatened to terminate Issei farm workers, both Mr. Cooke and Mr. Elberson stated they knew nothing at all.

Mr. Takeda then asked what would be the status of the divisions which had suspended their work because of the change in mess hours and Mr. Cooke stated that no hard feelings would be shown these workers and stated that they all return to work on the morrow. Mr. Elberson and Mr. Cooke stated they would see that no troubles or terminations would result from the office as a result of the attitude of other divisions.

Mr. Cooke promised to investigate complaints that fruit were being allowed to spoil in the warehouse instead of being issued at mess halls. Also to be investigated by Mr. Cooke was the charge



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that turnips and other vegetables had been dumped time after time from the packing shed. An effort was to be made to deliver such vegetables to messhalls. Also to be investigated was the lack of soap in certain messhalls. He assured the mess workers that two carloads of soap had been ordered and should be in the warehouse now.

upon being asked why more variety of fish was not served, Mr. Cooke explained that because of war time conditions, many fish could not be obtained but that because the administration understood the Japanese liking for fish, a sincere effort was being made thru Klamath Falls to get more kinds of fish.

Mr. Elbersen stated that he felt that Mr. Takeda was doing a good job on the mess situation, that he was doing an honest job without trying to agitate the workers, or trying to crush the workers and was therefore a very valuable man in labor relations. Therefore, if any investigation from the FBI should be forthcoming, he would support Mr. Takeda.

Mr. Takeda then requested Mr. Elbersen to ask Mr. Hoover to be a bit more diplomatic in his choice of words when speaking to the Japanese people. Mr. Elbersen explained that he was charged with good labor relations and that 90% of his work was to train the Caucasian staff here to work intelligently with the people.

Mr. Cooke and Mr. Elbersen left the meeting and a discussion was held by the workers concerning their plans. It was finally decided that the committee should go to the office and inform the administration that if the coats were issued on the morrow, work would be resumed the morning after such issue was begun.



October 13, 1942  
10:30 a.m.

Mr. Shirrel called in the committee of mess workers who had been appointed to negotiate with him for settlement of the recent mess difficulties. Mr. Shirrel had been acquainted with the grievances of the mess crews as a result of an interview by Mr. Elberson with Mr. Kintaro Takeda. He started the meeting by making it very clear to the committee that he was angry, "very, very angry with any group of people who would deliberately upset every plan and work schedule in the project with such a clever plan." He also made it clear that his upset in routine would cause him "to lose face with both the colonists and the personnel. And face is very important with the Japanese people." That the plan was very cleverly conceived by a man far smarter than Mr. Shirrell himself. However, the organization of this plan put the mess crews on a plane with the CIO or the IWW.

After a thorough discourse on his reasons for displeasure with the mess crews for this display of unreasonable impatience, Mr. Shirrel stated that the FBI would be called in on this case, that the FBI would be asked to check on the loyalty of each every issued and issued citizens in the project; that any disloyal persons found in the project would be sent elsewhere "so fast that they won't have a chance to pick up a toothbrush."

He also brought up the point that all such strikes and unpleasant incidents such as this were played up prominently in the Tulean Weekly, and such publicity would reflect adversely upon the colonists here at Tule Lake and cause many outsiders to lose all sympathy with us who are confined at this and other projects of the WRA.

He next brought up the subject of the discharge of Mr. Pilcher which was indirectly brought about by a petition made up and signed by approximately 9,000 colonists at the Tule Lake project who had grievances against Mr. Pilcher in connection with his handling of the mess personnel and the distribution of food. In Mr. Shirrel's words, "Mr. Pilcher was the best steward ever in this camp. In violation of all laws of fair play, I was forced to allow Mr. Pilcher to hand in his resignation." Mr. Shirrel was highly incensed over Mr. Pilcher's resignation. However, when it was brought to his attention that Mr. Pilcher was the center of trouble at the Walerga reception center, he stated that he "never would have allowed Mr. Pilcher to come here if he had known about Mr. Pilcher's trouble at Walerga." However, at the time of Mr. Pilcher's acceptance as project steward at Tule Lake, the personnel here was desperately in need of a steward and because Mr. Pilcher had been transferred to Salinas and his application had been made from there, he was accepted and commended work here. If a petition can fire Mr. Pilcher, such a petition signed tomorrow could cause



the discharge of Mr. Elberson. He also added as a final statement that he "would not blame Mr. Pilcher if he traveled around the country making speeches against the Japanese evacuees. I hope he does."

In answer to the mess crew's first request, that the full WRA allotment of 45 cents would be expended in an effort to right the almost unbearable situation arising in the mess halls for lack of sufficient supplies, Mr. Cooke stated that menus were received from San Francisco and upon being checked, it was seen to be unsatisfactory because many items on the menu were not available on the market. However, he promised that the full 45 cents would be spent but that because of the nationwide food rationing program now going into effect, we would eat less meat. Mr. Shirrel stated that we would have only 2½ pounds of meat per person per week, and that later it would be down to 2 pounds per week. He also stated that it would be necessary for us to eat more macaroni and pork and beans that we had ever eaten before. All food commodities now in the country would be commandeered on January first.

The second of the mess crew's requests was answered fully by Mr. Pilcher's resignation from his post as Project Steward.

The third issue to be settled by the committee was the matter of clothing issue for the mess hall workers. Mr. Shirrel stated that despite the WRA's many efforts to secure uniforms for mess workers, they were "not with a stone wall everywhere." Bids from manufacturers had been accepted and orders placed but the manufacturers would fail to fill such orders because the army had priority. However, 3 bids had been submitted, one each from Sears Roebuck and company, Montgomery Ward, and J. C. Penney of Klamath Falls and that immediately after the termination of the meeting, Mr. Cooke was to go to Klamath Falls to make certain whether the orders were being filled. Every effort was being made to secure the uniforms for the mess workers and 2,400 each of men's aprons, coats, and pants had been ordered. Also on the same order were 1,200 each of men's caps and shoes. 1,750 ladies uniforms are "on the rail now" and their arrival depended upon transportation.

Fourth on the list of requests was a discussion of delayed pay issues. Mr. Shirrel's answer was, "I have no influence with the treasury department" and due to the fact that the army, the navy, and 400,000 civilian workers had to be paid, the treasury department was unfortunately, behind in their payments but that the checks were certain to come soon.

Asked about the mackinaws in the warehouse and possibility of their being issued to mess workers, Mr. Cooke explained that they were "surplus commodities from other governmental departments" and that it would be impossible to obtain any further supplies.



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Therefore, the 6,000 coats were to be saved for the use of outside workers.

After the discussion of the various subjects, Mr. Shirrel stated that this upset in mess schedules was the result of a dozen or so agitators within the confines of this camp whose loyalties would be checked upon by the FBI. He said that he wished that all such persons might be sent to Japan that "they might be drafted into the Japanese Army and shot with American bullets by American soldiers."

Upon being informed that a meeting of the mess hall representatives would be held to receive their decision, Mr. Shirrel asked that Mr. Cooke and Mr. Elbersen be present at the meeting to explain his stand. He explained that he "was too mad" to be present. However, he made it clear that only one answer could come from the meeting and that was the decision of all the workers to return to work on schedule on the following morning. If such a decision was not made, all mess hall workers would be relieved of their duties and reassigned to other jobs. He closed by saying that this situation cast a "reflection on my ability as an administrator and upon my ability as a friend of the Japanese People." Troubles such as this would cause him to lose face with the staff and with himself.