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OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF TOPAZ
Sept. 11, 1942, at Recreation Hall, 7:30 p.m. Block 3
(meeting called and arranged by Community Activities Committee)

Questions asked of and answered by Center Director, Chas. Ernst and staff:

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Off the record--my informal discussion with you) Please note Mr. Ernst request that the following in quotes is off of the record. "You're not in California now. You're in Utah and so are not surrounded by military authorities. My earnest hope and objective which is the theoretic and academic hope of the WRA is to depopulate these centers so that you people will find permanent residence somewhere in the job and occupation you want or like. If we can do this in time, and let you find your private life all over the country in places you can get along, and we find ourselves without anyone to take care of anymore, the WRA will consider that it has done an ideal job. These centers will be depopulated in time as opportunities present themselves.

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

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

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

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

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Q: Where can we purchase stamps.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q: Can we vote in Utah?

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

Q: May we have visitors?

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

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

A: That's a real fundamental question and we won't fail you. Adequate water for whole center is assured. We have two shallow wells, and one deep well 1,000 feet. and another deep well being dug. Water is being tested and it has floride and chloride in it and the pipes have been chlorided, so we don't put any chloride in it. Doctors drink it and I do so it must be good. Don't worry about water.

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You will have sufficient good water supply for all. We won't fail you on that score.

Q: What about boundaries and curfews?

A: Who wants curfew anyway? If you want it we shall have it, but you will decide if you want it or not. Unless it's necessary and you decide that it's necessary, we shall have it. You tell us what you want and we shall try to oblige. If you want trees, you tell us, if you want wading pools, you tell us. We are here to serve you within our power and ability. It's your home and you decide how to run it. Boundaries are a little different matter. We have military police here.

Q: What are the boundaries of this center?

A: We have the military police here who have the responsibility to see that everyone of us stays within the one mile square area of this center between sunset and sunrise. During the day, between sunrise and sunset, the residents who are working can have much freedom as they go to work on the 12,000 acres area. (Ed note: I mentioned it to be 60,000 acres before, but it is only 12,000 acres which is large enough) Then during the day, the MPs patrol the 12,000 acres area. One can't just go wandering around without a foreman or some administrative officer. Same thing for going into Delta, the biggest town. For marriage license, one has to go to Delta. For special purposes, permission will be granted to leave camp.

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

A: Let's let Larry Collins who is here answer that. Larry: "Yes, you may have any kind of coop when you say you want them and the residents say they want it and are ready for it. In case you do have it, all the sales at our stores will issue receipts for every purchase. Cash or scrip can be decided upon by yourself."

Q: What will we use for money to buy anything and will basic clothing be issued?

A: That's something we haven't definitely decided, but will release information soon. Mr. Hughes, my assistant director is making a note of it so we shall take care of it. That's very important and that's the kind of question which is good and important. Clothing for workers (work clothes) will be issued, and for those who are willing and can't work because of no jobs, we shall have to make some arrangements for them. We are going to take pride in ourselves and see to it that there will be work for everyone. We shall try to be smart enough and ingenious enough to find something that you can all do well and give jobs to anyone who wants to work and is willing to work. That's our goal and we shall exert all effort in achieving it.

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

Meeting adjourned 9:00 P.M.

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REPORT OF SECOND OFFICIAL MASS ASSEMBLY MEETING OF TOPAZ
September 14, 1942 - 7:00 p.m. at Dining Hall #3

Block Manager, (pro temp) Rev. T. Goto, chairmanned the meeting. First part of the meeting had three speakers, Mr. Nakahiro, Issei, Mr. Matsushino, kibel, and Vernon Ichisaka, nisei. All the volunteer house captains were introduced and then Mr. Fred Hoshiyama gave brief summarized report of the proceedings which took place at the four house captains meetings to date. All the announcements, problems and their solution, suggestions and what actions taken, were presented in his talk.

Second part of meeting turned over to Mr. Tad Hirota who emceed the entertainment. Three Japanese numbers, one instrument, three vocal solos, one medley of songs by Damn Cossacks. Then Rev. T. Goto took over and tea was served by kitchen workers.

Third part of meeting was the two discussions given by Mr. Walter Hondrichs and Mr. Chas. Ernst. It is on these two speeches that I wish to comment and make a report. Rev. Goto introduced Mr. Walter Hondrichs, chief of Community Enterprises, who gave the following talk. (not verbatim--gists)

Mr. Walter Hondrichs:

Administrative instructions for Community Enterprises is very good. Nothing in it that I'd want to chance. It's very well worked out and to me it shows a very sincere attempt to get the needed things for us in the most practical manner. If some suggestions will be found to be in order later on some of the details, we shall certainly make them felt to our Regional Office through our Director, Mr. Ernst.

1. Canteen: This is OURS--not my canteen, not the storekeepers, but ours. In thinking aloud with you and trying to think this through with you, I want to discuss a moment about representation with you. We shall try to give the individual what he wants, but for any working system, there must necessarily be an organization.

Organization:

1. How to run services--We must sit down and think it over.
2. Need accounting system--the best accountant we can get to organize it.
3. We need Buying Committee--Experts who know where to buy best quality materials for the cheapest prices.

OURS

1. Whole community must feel the spirit that it is Ours. We need this community spirit.
2. We must put the right guy in the right job.
3. It must not be just a job...it must be an educational process and when we are through with our experience, we must have had caught the spirit of community cooperation and to have benefited individually for the experience through the help of the experts who will be in the work. Not just efficiency, but being a part of the whole and yet feel the whole program and spirit.
4. Pool resources...teamwork that filters throughout.
5. Opportunities for leadership. He accomplishes most who

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gets others to help him. Teach others, help others. Help take care of others. Feel the social responsibility to look out for the next man. Help lend leadership and pave the way.

COOPERATION

1. I didn't mention throughout my talk the one thing which I was talking about...the word Cooperation.
 - a. When we work together we can get farther. We may disagree and have differences but if we have something in common, we can get together.
 - b. We can get the best Canteen that will get the most things at the least cost...That's Co-Ops

Suggested readings: Cooperation and Religion--by catholic priest
Nova Scotia
Cooperation as Econ. Future--Wallace, vice-pres.
U. S.

COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT

Mr. Ernst:

Believe me when I say that more 'bull sessions' in the most dignified way has taken place among the WRA officials and directors on this subject (self-government) than any other subject, regarding Center life. What we do inside of the Center (not for the people inside, and I say this most sincerely and in confidence) will perhaps cause more rumpus on the outside than any other thing we might do and that thing is self-government. Our Center self-government might cause more comment and interest on the outside than anything else we might do in our Centers. Great deal of serious thinking has been done by Center heads and WRA officials on this problem. It is a very delicate problem and you'll have to take my word for it right at this moment.

From Washington D. C. has come down to us a very delicate framework of our self-government. Essence of it are:

1. Only those 18 yrs and over may be eligible to vote and hold appointive office. (need not be citizens) Anyone.
2. Only those 21 years and over may be nominated and elected to public office.. must be citizens of the United States.
3. The elected Council may make rules and regulations, but these must first be submitted to the Director of the Center and then to the Regional Office. This is desirable so that double check might be made on anything passed by the Council so that nothing which might be detrimental to the public interest on the outside will be passed.
4. We can begin our self-government when 75% of the families have arrived. This will be a provisional government and not a permanent one. We can't wait too long since policies must be made and representative organization must be formed. Next week, 25% of the families will be here and we can start our self government then. It'll be sort of a practice team and we can run through the signals and have our practices.

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Then later, when we want our Varsity government, we will know how to better organize and form one.

Judicial This will be an important branch of our community government. Laws of the local state and county must be upheld and observed. We shall be under their jurisdiction, observe local laws, and if necessary, which I hope will never take place, be tried in local courts. We shall have an Attorney on our staff as counsellors. There shall be a place for a "fact-finding Judiciary" in our Center.

The Council

The Council will be very important. Please do not confuse the Council which is an elective office (volunteer office) with the block manager's office which is an administrative appointive office. Also we must keep clear in our minds that Warden of Public Safety is another separate office.

I shall ask Mr. Lorne Bell, who is in charge of Community Services to give you few starting points of Community Government.

Mr. Lorne Bell:

First, we shall have to have a temporary or Provisional government. Elect temporary chairman and secretary to set up Election Bds. Then have nominations, election, prov. government, then permanent government, then, Charter for the community.

Election can take place five days after the notice of election has been made public and notice posted. We can keep having elections right along as new groups arrive. After we have our provisional government, then we can work on the permanent government and then draw up the charter. Many of you who are students of public administration and are experts in this field can render valuable services in helping set this up. Thank you.

Meeting adjourned

AGENDA FOR FIFTH MASS ASSEMBLY MEETING

Purpose: To give the newly arrived residents opportunity to meet Director Mr. Chas. F. Ernst, and his staff members.
To give the new arrivals an opportunity to ask questions, get desired information.

Time and Place: Dining Hall #9.....at 8:00 pm

AGENDA

Program for the evening

chairman: Fred Hoshiyama

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1. Pledge of allegiance to the Am. Flag--led by George Suzuki
2. "God Bless America" led by Goro Suzuki
3. Introduction Rev. T. Goto
Greetings in behalf of the residents already here.
Rev. T. Goto will introduce Mr. Chas. F. Ernst, Director
4. Mr. Chas. F. Ernst will give welcome message--Greetings to all the residents.....
 - a. Introduce his staff members who are present at meeting.
5. Chairman will ask following men to say just a few words, perhaps two or three minutes.
 - a. Mr. James Hughes, ass't. director--Block managers, operations
 - b. Mr. Art Eaton, Housing
 - c. Dr. W. S. Ramsey, Medical chief
 - d. Employment-placement Mr. James M. Jennings
 - e. Community Enterprises Mr. Walter Hondrichs
 - f. Community Services Mr. Lorne Bell
 - g. ~~Welfare~~ Welfare Mr. George Lafabregue
 - h. Mr. Chas. F. Ernst Community Gov't.
6. Interpretation--Rev. T. Goto (briefly)
7. First verse of "America" led by Goro Suzuki

meeting adjourned

Note:

Every caucasian person is important in the total community program and we realize this fact. We would like to have every person here say a few words but time will not permit it. Selection must be made somewhere and selection on basis of importance or ranking of the personnel is not our desire. We feel that the newly arrived residents will be primarily interested and directly concerned at this present moment on the above named sections. Therefore, we are presenting this idea for your approval. The reason we chose to have the staff members say a few words instead of just being introduced is to give the residents a chance to better know who is heading those departments and to give the caucasian staff members a chance to sell his or her personality. In this way, the rapport will be established much better than just being introduced. The experience with the first meeting proved that the feeling is better when staff members say a few words.

It is important that each speaker except Mr. Ernst keep their few words to the literal meaning of 'few words' since residents will be tired and we don't want to make the meeting too long.