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WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

CENTRAL UTAH PROJECT
TOPAZ, UTAH

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT
of the
TOPAZ CONSUMER COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISES

PROJECT REPORTS DIVISION
Historical Section

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W.R.A. POLICY

Administrative Instruction No. 26, dated August 25, 1942, outlines the basic policy of the War Relocation Authority relative to the establishment of Consumer Enterprises in Relocation Centers "to aid evacuees in obtaining goods and services not provided by the War Relocation Authority."

This instruction included provision for temporary organization until a permanent organization could be established.

TEMPORARY ENTERPRISES

"Certain Consumer Enterprises must be established at the time each center is opened in order to serve the needs of the residents from the outset. Such enterprises may be stocked and operated by the evacuees on a temporary basis under the general supervision of the Project Director until a permanent Consumer Cooperative Association of residents can be organized to take over the temporary enterprises."

PERMANENT ENTERPRISES

As soon as a Consumer Cooperative Association has been organized and incorporated, it may, with the approval of the Project Director, take over the assets and equities, but in such case shall assume the liabilities of the temporary enterprises in the center. Thereafter, the Association may be the permanent proprietor of these and other consumer enterprises which may be inaugurated in this center.

SUPERINTENDENT OF CONSUMER ENTERPRISES

The War Relocation Authority Personnel Chart provided for a superintendent of Consumer Enterprises, who "under the supervision of the Project Director is responsible for the development, organization, and administration of a variety of the consumer enterprises.....if necessary will be responsible for the establishment of governmentally operated canteens, merchandising institutions, and so forth to provide essential services and goods to the residents until the Cooperative Enterprises are established and properly functioning."

FIRST STEPS AT TOPAZ

In line with the above policy, a canteen was opened on September 12, under the personal supervision of the superintendent to serve the volunteer work crew that arrived from the Tanforan Assembly Center on September 11, 1942.

Only fast-moving merchandise such as candy, ice cream, fruit juice, tobacco, soap, and miscellaneous drug items was provided.

This merchandise was financed entirely on suppliers' credit. Salt Lake wholesalers were willing to extend the necessary 30 to 60 days' credit upon assurance that the merchandise would be sold at a fair margin for cash and that as soon as possible all accounts would be kept on a current basis.

The superintendent assumed the functions of manager and treasurer. All resident members were hired with the understanding that their appointment was temporary and subject to change whenever an organization of representatives of the community was established.

From day to day, as the supply of merchandise increased, new employees were added, but the organizational structure was kept very simple with only the general manager and a chief clerk to direct the work.

ACCOUNTING RECORDS AND MERCHANDISE CONTROL

Two college graduates with degrees in Business Administration and several years' experience in merchandising were employed to receive the merchandise and keep the accounts straight until a general accounting policy could be agreed upon.

By keeping a few very simple merchandise control records, it was possible to provide all the necessary information for future accounting purposes, and pay bills as promptly as cash on hand permitted. These records were as follows:

1. Purchase Order and Receiving Memo (Pacific Manifolding Rediform No. 145 Triplicate)
 - 1) Original to vendor
 - 2) Office Copy
 - 3) Receiving Copy

The Receiving Copy was used to record merchandise actually received and used to check the invoice. As soon as the retail selling price was determined, this was entered on the Receiving Copy or on the invoice for future reference.

2. Perpetual Inventory and Stock Record Card

This card provided space for a record of merchandise ordered, received, and issued from the warehouse to the stores. A separate card was used for each item.

3. Voucher Checks were used to pay all bills and a copy of the check was attached to the invoice, which was attached to the Purchase Order and Receiving Memo. These were filed as a unit

for future reference.

The procedure for collecting sales taxes and excise taxes was cleared with the proper authorities.

CAPITAL EQUIPMENT

No capital equipment was purchased at this time because the major objective was to get the community to assume full responsibility for management, control, and finance of the enterprises at the earliest possible opportunity. It seemed obvious that this program of "self help" would succeed only to the degree that the residents exercised a direct voice in determining what financial obligations they would assume and limited their investments to whatever amount they themselves could provide.

Considerable interest in the development of a cooperative had been developed at the Tanforan Assembly Center, largely through the efforts of Rev. Taro Goto, a Methodist minister, and Hiroshi Korematsu, a graduate of the Cornell College of agriculture.

Classes were conducted by these men to acquaint the residents with the theory and practice of cooperation. Aside from the influence of these men, other factors were at work in the Tanforan Assembly Center to stimulate this interest in the establishment of a cooperative. Reports from some of the residents indicated that there was general dissatisfaction with the stores in the assembly center, and that the wide interest in cooperatives grew largely out of a desire on the part of the people to control business. Three things in particular were wanted by the residents:

1. A greater voice in the selection of merchandise to be sold in the stores.
2. A greater voice in the selection and control of the store employees.
3. A greater voice in the determination of general merchandising policy.

On September 24, when approximately one half of the residents had arrived in Topaz, Rev. Goto led a small group of men in a general discussion concerning the ways and means of establishing a Consumers Cooperative store.

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 P.M., September 24, 1942, in the rear of Dining Hall #4 with the permission of Mr. S. Furuichi, pro-tempore manager of said dining hall. Besides the chairman, the following were present: Messrs: H. Ozawa, D. I. Uchida, K.V. Kasai, E.S. Ishizaki, S. Matsumoto, Y. Kasai, and J.S. Aoki.

The following items in order were decided:

1. That a temporary cooperative office will be established in the rear of Dining Hall #4 until more suitable space can be found.
2. That Messrs. Ozawa, Uchida, and Kasai shall take charge of the office from 10:00 to 11:30 A.M., and that Messrs. Ishizaki, Sakai, Matsumoto, and Aoki shall take charge from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M.
3. That a temporary Cooperative conference shall be established to prepare the way for more permanent organization. That the seventeen blocks now occupied shall select two or three representatives to this congress and that as new blocks are opened, each in turn will be asked to send two or three delegates.
4. That the following persons serve on the Steering Committee of this preliminary conference:

Rev. Kawamori, Rev. M. Nishimura, Messrs. S. Matsumoto, H. Ozawa, S. Furuichi, K.V. Kasai, J.S. Aoki, Y. Moriwaki, F. Hoshiyama, F. Ogawa, E. Kitow, A. Kozakura, Y. Sakai, E.S. Ishizaki, H. Hornemi, S. Yamashita, K. Nakajima, D.T. Uchida, T. Hikoyeda, T. Yatabe, M. Sakakihara, V. Ichidaka, and Rev. T. Goto. Mr. S. Matsumoto, Chairman.

5. That another meeting be held at 2:30 P.M., September 26, in Dining Hall #4 with the hope of obtaining a more representative group to hear Mr. Walter Honderich's address on the subject of "How to Organize a Consumers Cooperative."

Saturday, September 26, 1943

The meeting was called to order by Rev. Goto, who, acting as chairman for Mr. S. Matsumoto, requested the latter to read the minutes of the last meeting. After this was done, the chairman stressed the urgent need for a consumers cooperative. He then introduced Mr. Walter Honderich to address the gathering on the topic of "How to Organize a Cooperative."

Mr. Honderich first asked how many in the group were businessmen. Seventy-five out of the eighty responded in the affirmative. This was significant because of its probable influence on the nature and operation of the business. As a general rule, very few merchants are represented in Consumer Cooperatives.

The first phase of Mr. Honderich's talk was mainly concerned with the history of the cooperative movement. He emphasized that successful cooperatives are guided by the following principles:

1. Each member of the Cooperative Society shall have one vote.

2. There shall be no proxy voting.
3. Each member shall contribute his share of the necessary capital.
4. No one shall be refused membership because of race, religion or political affiliations.
5. The Cooperative shall always sell at the current market price.
6. All sales shall be for cash.
7. All net surplus earned by the Cooperative shall be paid back as a patronage rebate to each member in proportion to the amount he has purchased from the Cooperative.

At the end of this discussion, Mr. Honderich proposed three questions for consideration by the group:

1. Should we permit everyone in Topaz to vote even though he has had no business experience?
2. What should be the minimum age limit for voting?
3. What system of representation will best serve the interests of all the residents of Topaz?

At this point, Mr. Honderich stressed the importance of getting true representatives of the people with no opportunity for politics. After thorough discussion of these three points, the meeting adjourned to reassemble in Dining Hall #4 on Monday, September 28, 1942.

Monday, September 28, 1942

The meeting of September 28 was called to order at 2:45 P.M., by Mr. S. Matsumoto, Chairman.

After roll call, discussion was resumed on the general proposal to organize the Cooperative.

Rev. Goto stressed the importance of working toward the immediate goal of establishing a Cooperative here based on historical experience.

Mr. J.S. Aoki suggested that Mr. Hiroshi Korematsu be asked to serve in an advisory capacity.

Rev. Kyogoku pleaded that the chairmanship remain as is without resorting to arguments on theories of the cooperative movement and that those well versed in cooperative techniques be allowed to run the cooperative in a business way.

Mr. Honderich introduced the following highlights on the cooperative movement:

1. Everybody is a consumer.

2. People organize Cooperatives for the purpose of getting the things they want.
3. The WRA will assist in setting up a Cooperative Society here at Topaz.
4. The Cooperative will have its own bank account and conduct business in the same manner as any outside Cooperative.
5. The books of the Cooperative will be audited by the W.R.A.
6. The W.R.A. will serve in an advisory capacity to help the people get what they want.
7. Only one Cooperative will be allowed in Topaz, but it may have many subdivisions.
8. No private enterprises will be permitted in Topaz because these would give an unfair advantage to the residents fortunate enough to get control of them.
9. All employees hired by Consumer Enterprises must be requisitioned through the W.R.A. Placement Office and will be paid the prevailing wages of the Center.
10. The following are some of the rights and responsibilities of the members of such a Cooperative:
 - a. Each shall have full use of its facilities.
 - b. Each shall have access to all records and minutes at reasonable times.
 - c. No members may be expelled from a Cooperative without being permitted a hearing, first before the Executive Board, and if he so desires, before a general membership meetings.
 - d. Members shall be given due notice of all membership meetings.
 - e. To safeguard member interests, adequate records must be maintained of all official action.
 - f. All responsible officers handling cash must be bonded.
 - g. Adequate insurance must be carried to protect all Cooperative property.
 - h. The accounting records must be audited quarterly for the first year and at least semi-annually thereafter.

In answer to an inquiry, Mr. Honderich reported that financial aid may be possible through a loan from W.R.A. at 3% per annum, but it must be definitely determined first that such a loan is needed by the members and that adequate security can be given the Government.

Mr. Hiroshi Korematsu followed with a brief review of the seminars at Tanforen and the workings of the various committees there as they were based

on a hypothetical setup.

Mr. Honderich followed with a suggestion that a more definitely representative system be established immediately and that it be according to the following plans:

1. Each occupied barrack shall be asked to elect from its members two representatives to a Block Assembly. These shall be selected by secret ballot, but do not necessarily have to know anything about the cooperative movement.
2. The Block Assemblymen in each block shall then convene to elect, by secret ballot, from their membership two representatives to the temporary Cooperative Congress.
3. The Cooperative Congress shall then convene to elect, by secret ballot, from its membership fifteen to the Executive Board.
4. It shall be the responsibility of this temporary Executive Board to establish whatever subcommittees it deems necessary to carry on the temporary program of the cooperative and to prepare the way for permanent organization at a future date.

He stressed the importance of getting true representation of the people from the beginning and that the elected leaders shall consider themselves responsible to the people at all times. He stressed further that due to the inexperience of the people, many mistakes would undoubtedly be made, that these could not be considered serious because this was only a temporary organization, and at a future time the people would be given another opportunity to pass upon the decisions of the temporary Executive Board and Congress and to make whatever changes they felt desirable. "In keeping with this spirit, it is not desirable that long-term contracts or heavy investments in capital equipment be made that will bind the members to obligations they themselves might not approve."

In order that the work might progress as rapidly as possible even before all blocks were occupied, it was agreed that each block should hold an election as soon as possible but that the Board of Directors should not be elected until all blocks were represented.

Following this discussion, the people present decided to elect a new temporary Executive Committee to carry out the proposals for more adequate representation as suggested by Mr. Honderich.

Mr. Hiroshi Korematsu moved that a committee of ways and means be established. Rev. Goto seconded the motion. Nominations were made and the following were elected: Rev. Goto, Mr. S. Ishizaki, Mr. D.T. Uchida, Mr. S. Aoki, Mr. S. Furuichi, and Mr. K. Nakajima. Forty-one were present and thirty-eight voted.

The Committee meeting was called for 9:00 A.M., September 29, 1942 in Dining Hall #4.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M., to reconvene at 1:30 P.M., September 29, 1942 at the same place.

Tuesday, September 29, 1942
10:00 A.M.

The six representatives elected yesterday afternoon assembled in Dining Hall #4 and after deliberation adopted the following proposals:

1. Each resident of Topaz 16 years of age or over shall be allowed to vote in Consumer Enterprises.
2. Each resident of Topaz 16 years of age or over shall be asked to invest one dollar in the cooperative. Those hesitating to do so shall not be urged.
3. A committee shall be selected to enlighten the residents about the plans for a consumer cooperative. This committee shall have an outline of the topics to be discussed in both English and Japanese. It was unanimously agreed at this gathering that the following notice be posted in both languages at some convenient place in each occupied block:

"There will be an election in this building tonight to select two delegates to the House Cooperative meeting. A representative will come to conduct the election. Each building will elect two men to the Block Assembly. All persons in the building 16 years or over will be eligible to vote, and election will be by secret ballot."

The committee decided to present these decisions at the afternoon meeting and to select from this larger group a committee to assist in conducting the elections in the various blocks.

Regarding Consumer Enterprises, Mr. Honderich made the following brief explanations:

1. The capital raised from the community for Consumer Enterprises should be provided as nearly as possible from each resident on an equal basis.
2. This capital should receive neither interest nor dividends from the earnings of the business.
3. All earnings should be paid back to the residents on a patron-

age rebate basis. This is the only way to secure fair treatment to all end to assure that the cooperatives will actually operate on a strictly cost basis.

4. Those residents who do not subscribe to the initial \$1.00 membership shall be allowed to accumulate credit for patronage rebates on the same basis as those who have subscribed, but their membership must be deducted from these earnings before they can receive a patronage rebate.
5. Even the children should be allowed participating membership in the Cooperative, but those under 16 years of age will not be allowed to vote.
6. If the Cooperative Council or Executive Board presents the problems of the cooperative clearly, even the residents 16 years of age will be able to make right decisions when they vote.
7. The Executive Board, if it works full time in the interest of the community could be paid the regular W.R.A. wage, but this decision should be subject to the vote of the people so that there can be no possible misunderstanding.

At the present time, the temporary canteen:

1. Is operating on a strictly cash and carry basis.
2. Is operating 100% on suppliers' credit.
3. All invoices are marked with the retail selling price opposite each item so that as soon as the Accounting Department is set up, it can accurately determine the exact amount of cash that it should have been taken in by the store.
4. All receipts have been deposited in the Delta Branch Bank in an account that can be withdrawn only by the Superintendent of Consumer Enterprises. This arrangement will continue until such time as the cooperative is properly organized and a responsible treasurer is employed.
5. Vouchers have been made for every payment that is made and a carbon copy is filed with each invoice.
6. The canteen may be taken over at any time by the residents provided the properly elected leaders give evidence that they are ready to assume responsibility in the interest of the people.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 A.M.

Tuesday, September 29, 1942

The preliminary Cooperative Congress reassembled at 1:45 P.M. at Dining Hall

Following the usual roll call, Rev. Goto was requested by the chairman to explain the results of the committee's meeting this morning which was as follows:

1. The minimum age limit of 16 years for voting privileges was adopted because W.R.A. considers these people did enough to work for compensation.
2. He explained the procedure that was decided upon by the committee in the morning for establishing the temporary Cooperative Congress and read the notice that was to be posted in each block.

After the action of the committee was approved, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 P.M.

Saturday, October 3, 1942

A meeting of the Temporary Congress was called to order at 3:00 P.M. by Mr. S. Matsumoto.

Since no quorum was present, the meeting was open for informal discussion. A brief report was made of the actions of previous meetings and a diagram of the plan for representatives was sketched for further clarification and discussion.

The chairman appointed the following committees to help with the election in the various newly-occupied blocks:

Blocks #29-36	Mr. J.S. Aoki and Mr. S. Furuichi
30-31-32	Mr. O. Takizawa, and Mr. H. Ozawa
37-38-39	Mr. S. Yamate and Mr. S. Iida
35-42	Mr. S. Ishizaki and Mr. R. Maeyama

Those already elected to the temporary Cooperative Congress were announced as follows:

Block No.	3	Messrs. H. Honnami and F. Hoshiyama
	4	Messrs. G. Hoshiga and Ray Kaneko
	5	Messrs. C. Obata and R. Maeyama
	6	Messrs. S. Furuichi and G. Kondo
	7	Messrs. D.T. Uchida and K. Suzuki
	9	Mr. J.S. Aoki
	10	Messrs. F. Iwanaga and H. Ikeda
	11	Messrs. S. Matsumoto and K.V. Kasai
	12	Mr. K. Nakajima and Dr. S. Murata
	14	Messrs. K. Hashimoto and M. Shinkai
	16	Messrs. O. Takizawa and M. Takei
	19	Messrs. S. Ishizaki and H. Ozawa

- 20 Messrs. S. Yamate and S. Iida
- 22 Messrs. N. Takakuwa and Y. Sakai
- 23 Messrs. S. Akashi and H.A. Takahashi
- 26 Messrs. F. Kaku and K. Yoda
- 29 Messrs. K. Ino and T. Sakurai
- 30 Messrs. M. Narahara and K. Nakamura
- 36 Messrs. G. Shimamoto and A. Sugawara
- 42 Messrs. P.M. Matsuki and Charles Teshima

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 P.M.

By October 7, twenty-seven blocks had elected Congressmen. It was generally agreed that a Board of Directors should be elected at once, even though six blocks were not yet organized. Primary consideration in this decision was that since this was a temporary organization, those blocks not yet represented would have ample opportunity for representation on the permanent Board, and that pressure of work to be done justified proceeding ahead of schedule.

The first Cooperative Congress meeting was called to order on October 7 at 1:40 P.M. by the temporary chairman, Mr. S. Matsumoto. Forty-nine members answered roll call. After brief discussion, the chairman called for nominations from the floor for the fifteen directors to be elected. Thirty-one were nominated. Before ballots were cast, a brief recess was called to permit a more careful study of the candidates. When the ballots were finally cast and counted, it was found that only 12 had received majority votes. Due to lateness of the hour, it was decided to reconvene on the following day to cast ballots for the three positions not yet filled.

On October 8 the meeting was called to order at Dining Hall #4 at 1:30 P.M. Forty-one members answered roll call. Ballots were then cast to fill the three vacancies on the Board of Directors. The fifteen elected were:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. D.T. Uchida | 12. M. Shinkai |
| 2. S. Aoki | 13. C. Uyematsu |
| 3. S. Fuzuchi | 14. N. Narahara |
| 4. S. Shizaki | 15. H. Ozawa |
| 5. K. Ino | |
| 6. K. Kanzaki | |
| 7. S. Matsumoto | |
| 8. K. Nakajima | |
| 9. M. Narahara | |
| 10. T. Sakai | |
| 11. Y. Sakai | |

The first Executive Board Meeting was called on October 9 by Mr. S. Matsumoto, temporary chairman of the Congress. By acclamation, Mr. D.T. Uchida was made the unanimous choice for chairmanship. In accepting the chairmanship, Mr. Uchida asked for the utmost cooperation and sincere efforts of all board members.

Following this acceptance, Mr. Honderich cautioned the Board to disregard all distinction between Issei and Nisei and to work out a program for the best interest of all ages, so that there will be complete confidence in the newly elected Board. He stressed that there should be continuation of the normal life that was prevailing prior to evacuation wherein Nisei coming out of schools were gradually filling the positions of responsibility under the guidance of the older, more experienced Issei.

The following committees were decided upon as necessary in the development of the program:

1. By-Laws and Charter
2. Accounting and Records
3. Merchandising
4. Production
5. Education
6. Fact Finding (Market study and statistical data)
7. Banking (for individual members of the Cooperative as well as for the Association)
8. Personnel

After a brief discussion on the various duties and the importance of the committees, the following members were appointed:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. By-Laws and Charter | Mr. Kanzaki, Mr. Yamate |
| 2. Accounting and Records | Mr. K. Ino, Mr. S. Matsumoto |
| 3. Merchandising | Mr. Y. Sekai, Mr. S. Ishisaki
Mr. M. Shinkai |
| 4. Production (Committeeman to be elected later) | Mr. S. Furuichi |
| 5. Education | Mr. S. Aoki, Mr. H. Ozawa |
| 6. Fact Finding | Mr. M. Narahara, Mr. C. Uyematsu |
| 7. Banking | Mr. K. Nakajima, Mr. T. Sekai |
| 8. Personnel | Mr. Uchida, Mr. Ino, Mr. Matsumoto,
Mr. Kanzaki |

The second Executive Board Meeting was held October 12. Fifteen members were present.

The Fact Finding Committee reported a statistical breakdown according to age and sex of the population of Topaz.

Mr. Honderich suggested that the Accounting Committee study and

adopt the system of accounting developed by the Charles R. Hadley Company for Post Exchanges because this would prove most satisfactory with a few adaptations for the Topaz Cooperative.

The Banking Committee reported that efforts had been made to contact a representative of the Credit Union National Association and that a Credit Union would save considerable money for the residents by rendering the cost of cashing checks, and b providing opportunity for local deposits.

The Merchandise Committee recommended:

1. That the Board take over immediately the operation of the present canteen.
2. That we attempt to establish four stores in the corners of the high school grounds if possible.
3. That we retain all present employees of the canteen.
4. That we establish a grocery department with milk, eggs, and jam.
5. That the following services be considered:
 - Order Department for Mail Orders
 - Drug Department
 - Hardware Department
 - Beauty Salon
 - Shoe Repairing Service
 - Radio Repair Service
 - Watch Repair Service
 - Optometrist Service
6. That the existing barber shops reduce their present 25¢ charges.
7. That we rent the necessary cash registers if possible.

The By-Laws and Charter Committee submitted sample copies of model By-Laws.

The Education Department stated that it was greatly handicapped because it did not have a mimeograph machine, but that negotiations were being made to obtain the use of the W.R.A. duplicator.

The Personnel Committee reported that it had not yet been able to contact Mr. Jennings of the Placement Bureau to make arrangements for recruiting personnel.

The matter of working capital was discussed at length, especially the possibility of borrowing funds from the Federal Government. It was finally agreed that a limited amount of capital will be raised from the Cooperative members voluntarily, even though government funds might be available. The initial capital shall be a \$1.00 share per person, 16 years of age or over. The stores shall be taken over

immediately since this can be done without initial capital from the residents.

The Third Cooperative Congress Meeting was called to order on October 13, 7:45 P.M. in Dining Hall #4. Forty-four Congressmen answered roll call. Mr. D.T. Uchida reported on the two Executive Board Meetings that were held on October 9 and 12. A motion was made by Mr. G. Shimamoto, seconded by R. Kaneko and unanimously carried to accept the recommendation of the Board that \$1.00 Membership Share be sold to all residents 16 years of age or over. This was unanimously carried. It was agreed that the Congressmen will report back to their Block Assemblies, and with the consent of the Block Assemblies, canvass the members for these \$1.00 shares.

On October 13, the Merchandise and Accounting Committees took a physical inventory, checked the books to date and prepared to take over the management of the store on October 14.

The Balance Sheet showed assets of \$11,174.50; Accounts Payable at \$7,753.58; with other Liabilities of \$868.90, and Net Worth of \$2,552.02. This Net Worth was the amount of accumulated earnings from September 12 through October 13.

The Third Executive Board Meeting was called to order at 1:45 P.M. at Dining Hall #4 on October 16, 1942. The details of taking over the business were reported by the Merchandise and Accounting Committee.

The Personnel Committee told of the difficulties it was having in selecting the right persons for each position. Needed especially were a general manager, departmental heads for the drug, confectionary, grocery, dry goods, and hardware departments. Also a cost accountant and stock keeper. There were some who believed that in order to avoid criticism, employees should be recruited equally from all blocks. The conclusion reached however, was that this was not sound and that the store was for the purpose of serving the people, not for providing good jobs. Therefore, all employees should be recruited on the basis of the service they would render. It was agreed that the Personnel Committee would work in very close collaboration with the W.R.A. Placement Office and recruit all employees through that office.