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The
Coop
movement

The Co-op Movement in Tule Lake

Introduction

A. What the co-op movement in Tule Lake is

When the Tule Lake Project was first opened there was no provision for the War Relocation Authority to run a store for the benefit of the colonists. The desire of the War Relocation Authority was to have the colonists form a consumers' cooperative and operate their own store. For the convenience of the residents, however, it was felt imperative to set up a temporary community store to sell necessary articles. Mr. Kendall Smith was put in charge of the Community Enterprise, as it was called. Although the Enterprise was in Mr. Smith's hands and not under the War Relocation Authority, it was understood that "the existing net worth of the temporary community enterprise now in operation on certain relocation centers belongs to the evacuees. This fund shall be paid over in full to the permanent/^{consumer} cooperative association upon its organization."¹

The War Relocation Authority was not allowed to operate a store. Private enterprises for the sale of retail goods and services were also prohibited. Mr. Smith, therefore, could not operate the store as a private enterprise on more than a temporary basis. It could not be turned back to the War Relocation Authority. The need to form a cooperative which would take over the community enterprises was immediate.

The significant policy of the War Relocation Authority has been to allow the Japanese to run their own affairs as much as possible. Early in the history of the War Relocation Authority to allow consumer cooperatives in the relocation centers had been made an official policy. While there was

¹ Administrative Instructions No. 26.

much talk of self-government and allowing Japanese to take over as much of the work done by Caucasian staff members, the Co-op Movement was the first opportunity the Japanese had of actually controlling their own affair completely. Ever since they had been in an assembly center, most of their needs had been taken care of by the WCCA or the WRA. Many Japanese were in the frame of mind of desiring to get as much ^{out} of the War Relocation Authority as possible at the time the idea of setting up a cooperative of their own was approached them.

Another interesting aspect of the Co-operative Movement in Tule Lake was that it was not set up to fight competition of other business, especially big business, but was more or less forced on the Japanese people through the War Relocation Authority policy. The resulting antagonisms that were released, however, not only involved the War Relocation Authority and the Japanese people, but also Mr. Smith, while the Community Council also joined the entanglement.

B. Significance of the Co-op Movement

While the study of the Co-op Movement in Tule Lake should reveal a great deal in terms of what actually happened when the Japanese were given the opportunity to set up a consumer's co-op of their own, the Co-op Movement seems to be valuable in offering a good contrast to the Community Council. While the Council is composed only of Niseis, as Isseis are not allowed to take elective positions in the community, the Co-op Movement was dominated from the beginning by Isseis and had an equal representation of Isseis and Niseis. While the Council conducted most of its business in English, the Co-op employed the Japanese language as its main means of communication, except in its relation with the Caucasian staff. The Co-op was a business organization, whereas the Council was a political organization. The Council

had the interest of the Niseis to protect against encroachment of Isseis with nationalistic tendencies. Fortunately for the Isseis the Co-op was also a democratic social movement which held democratic ideals highly. The co-op leaders were people who were willing to leave the final decision of important matters up to the people. In the Council, however, a struggle was going on to retain the power of making decisions within the Council instead of taking issues back to the people, and a few JACL leaders were being accused of trying to control the Council.

These differences may be too varied and numerous to afford a good comparison. Factors which are responsible for differences of reactions by these two organizations may be difficult to point out. Differences of attitudes, ways of doing things, etc., however, should afford some good insights into many problems.

Also since these two organizations will probably be the two most powerful ones on the Project, their progress and interaction will be worth following closely.

Because Isseis and Niseis will be represented equally in the Co-op Movement, it will afford grounds for Issei-Nisei interaction. The development and progress of the Issei-Nisei split should be one of the important issues to observe. The antagonism between the two generations have become quite evident in a series of incidents. Through the study of the Co-op Movement, some of the causes of this split may be discovered. Some cultural conflict situations that Niseis must face may also be discovered.

Since the Co-op Movement is dominated by Isseis, its study should reveal many of the customs maintained by the Japanese and the attitudes many Isseis have brought with them to the Project and developed here as a result of their life in the Project.

All of these phases of the Co-op Movement should reveal, in part,

the repercussions of living in a Relocation Project.

C. Method of Writing

Since the process of organization of Co-op Movement is mainly discussed in this section of the preliminary report, a chronological act of the Movement will be given. An attempt will be made to develop the points brought out in the preceding paragraphs. Following this an account of any other important problems which have not been clarified will be given, analysis and evaluation of the data coming last.

A. The Launching of the Movement

Ever since the first arrival of evacuees to the Tule Lake Relocation Center, local WRA officials have frequently voiced the view that this project constitutes a "cooperative venture," or a "cooperative community." The term "cooperative" so used lacked clarity and full meaning to the people, although it indicated the desire of the administration that the people learn to work as a united body for their common good. How such unified action might be achieved remained unexplained at the outset. But a concrete program for a cooperative movement in this project developed when it was suggested that the community stores, temporarily under the supervision of the WRA community enterprise division, might be controlled by the people through a consumer cooperative. The chief organizer of this movement was Mr. Don Elberson of the administrative personnel, abetted by cooperative leaders in this community.

The idea of a consumer cooperative in the Tule Lake Project had its inception among a few members of the administrative personnel; namely, Dr. H. L. Jacoby, Dr. J. D. Francis, and Mr. Theodore Waller, who began to talk of its possibilities here. Elberson came as a cooperative specialist, and

further stimulated discussion on the subject among the administrators. Since the resettlement of evacuees was begun on May 28, 1942 and was not completed until July 24, 1942, the education of the people in the consumer cooperative plan was, at first, necessarily slow; but recently an organized cooperative movement was begun among the people.

B. Incipient Organization

Mr. Elberson started this work here early in June with a talk, to the small group of evacuees who had already arrived, on the possibilities of a consumer cooperative in their community. This talk stimulated discussion, but gave few who attended the meeting any clear conception of the speaker's view. Personal contact was established with leaders of church groups, the forum committee, and other special interest groups, but each group tended to see the cooperative in terms of its own interest, which resulted in a diffusion rather than concentration of energy in the organizational work. Confusion dominated this incipient spread of the cooperative movement, but the ground was laid for its more systematic propagation.

C. Leader Training

Observing the need for a more careful education of the community in the cooperative movement, Mr. Elberson met with a small group of interested persons at the home of Howard Inaseki, then city editor of the Tulcan Dispatch, to discuss the desirability of evening classes on the cooperative movement. As a result of this discussion, a series of nine lectures by Mr. Elberson on the "Highlights of the Cooperative Movement" was proposed, and scheduled to be given twice a week, beginning on Monday, July 6. Twenty persons were invited to the first session of the class, but almost fifty persons appeared at the meeting. During the first few discussions, there seemed to exist a

general skepticism of the cooperative movement, especially of its application to this community, a doubt enhanced by the widespread grumbling against the "high prices" in the community stores, which pointed popular concern toward some direct method of lowering prices rather than toward the reorganization of the whole economy; but as discussion progressed, a nucleus of leadership developed, and rumors spread in the community of the projected cooperative movement. Popular opinion about the desirability of the cooperative naturally was divided, and based on scant knowledge of its program, but discussion on the subject served to intensify interest in the movement.

D. Don Elbersen, A Liberal

Much of the success of the Co-op Movement, if any, must be attributed to the co-op staff headed by Don Elbersen, which often worked behind the scenes. Mr. Elbersen was in his late 30's. He had a stable personality and liberal ideals which helped him adjust himself well among the Japanese people. He never made a dogmatic decision when he could consult the Japanese on the matter. While he continued to make suggestions to Japanese co-op leaders, he did not protest when they went ahead of their own accord. He insisted on maintaining democratic principles, and preferred to work behind the scene as much as possible. His attitude toward the Japanese, moreover, was that of a liberal who believed in not discriminating because of race. This background of democratic ideals made it possible to deal with Japanese without taking a superior attitude that so many of the other Caucasian staff members tended to take. As the head of the block managers, he was able to come in contact with Japanese in key positions, both Isseis and Niseis, and he was able to get insights into their nature. Of all the Caucasian staff members, he was probably the one who got along with the Japanese the best. It was for this reason that he was made the labor relation man for the administration by Mr. Shirrell.

III Preliminary Organization

A. Issei Interest in Co-ops

A combination of favorable circumstances laid the setting for the next stage. Dissatisfaction with the existing management of the community stores led to a search by the people for some system whereby the people would have more direct control over their stores. A group of about fifteen Issei, who were a part of the dissatisfied element, were meeting among themselves trying to seek some solution for the problem. When Mr. Elbersen learned of this group, he invited them to a meeting in which he offered the cooperative as a possible way out. The fifty to seventy Issei who attended were in favor of an immediate application of the plan, but Elbersen saw the time as premature, for there yet remained the need to organize the people for mass support of the cooperative movement. The possibility of a community-wide organization of the educational process, however, was now clearly at hand, and Elbersen decided to use the block managers and their knowledge of block personnel to enlarge the scope of propagation. He thereupon asked each block manager to select from his block two representatives, preferably one Issei and one Nisei, and preferably from those who had attended the lecture series, to attend a community-wide cooperative assembly. About the middle of July, block meetings were held in some areas to discuss the proposed cooperative plan and to select representatives, while in other blocks the managers made their own appointments.

On July 22, the first general meeting of block representatives to the cooperative assembly was called. Mr. Kendall Smith, Supervisor of Community Enterprises, Mr. Larry Collins, Regional Supervisor of Consumer Cooperatives, and Mr. Don Elbersen were among those present. At this time all of Pinedale had not entered the Colony yet, and consequently they were not wholly repre-

sented at this first meeting. There were probably 80 or 90 representatives present at the meeting.

Mr. Elbersen opened the meeting and explained that there were two purposes for the meeting. One was the choosing of a Provisional Advisory Council to the Community Enterprise Manager, Mr. Smith. He suggested one from each ward be chosen to sit on this council. The main purpose of this Advisory Council was to convey some of the desires of the people to Mr. Smith so that there would be less friction in the management of the store, which was entirely in Mr. Smith's hands. It was also calculated to be a means of getting the Japanese people interested in managing the Community Enterprise by themselves. This was to be a temporary Council to function until the cooperative was organized.

The other suggestion that Mr. Elbersen made was that this group of representatives be the nucleus to organize a representative among the Japanese. For this purpose, he suggested a series of educational meetings in each ward where representatives could learn something about consumer cooperatives before launching a cooperative of their own. It was Mr. Elbersen's firm belief that a cooperative would not be successful unless it sprang from a need felt among the people and there was an understanding of the principles of the Co-op. This desire for a groundwork of education was based on Mr. Elbersen's deep belief in the principles of the coop, a fact which characterized Elbersen's relation with the Japanese people.

As many of the representatives were Isseis, who did not understand English very well, Elbersen had provided a translator, Tad Tomita. During the discussion, too, some of the discussion had to be translated to Isseis, and to Caucasians when Isseis spoke in Japanese. This language difficulty was to continue as long as relations had to be maintained with Caucasians, who could not be ignored.

The ensuing discussion was characterized by confusion. Few of the Nisei representatives had attended some of Elbersson's lectures and had an understanding of some of the principles of the co-op. Some of them also had faith in the good intentions of the War Relocation Authority which was doing all it could to help the Japanese people. To these enlightened few the Co-op Movement which was encouraged by the Administration, was a sign of their good faith--a chance for the Japanese people to run their own affairs which they should seize. The majority, however, had very little understanding of the principles of the co-op. Many of the War Relocation Authority policies concerning the Community Enterprises were not clear to most of the people, too.

One of the most surprising occurrences at this meeting was the strong opposition to the Japanese people taking over the Community Enterprises at all. From the questions asked and remarks made, most of this opposition can be traced to suspicion toward the War Relocation Authority, a desire to get the most from the War Relocation Authority, and a short-range view of the Co-op Movement.

The feeling of suspicion was very clearly expressed. There was a feeling that the War Relocation Authority was trying "to put something over" on the Japanese. Someone asked: "Why doesn't the Government run it (the canteen) and sell at cost?" The opinion was expressed that it was doubtful profits would be returned to the people. "We don't know whether the War Relocation Authority wants to unload its burden on us. Are they going to unload their mistake on us?" After the meeting a Nisei expressed what others probably felt too: "If a cooperative is operated, then it's less likely for the WRA to foot some of the overhead. They should do that."

Similar to this feeling of suspicion another Nisei expressed this opinion after the meeting: "What's the use of being satisfied with just a small portion of self-government. If we are going to talk about democracy inside barbed-wire fence, we should not be appeased with only a little of it." This same Nisei was suspicious of the motives of the WRA and was against the setting up of a cooperative. He could not reconcile the discriminatory treatment he had received with the desire of the WRA to allow the people some measure of self-government.

Practically all of the people who took part in the discussion showed ignorance of the importance of the cooperative as a social movement. The only one who expressed a favorable opinion on this point was Mr. Smith, who was not what can be called a "co-op man." But he could see some of the advantages of a cooperative to the people, and he seemed to be exasperated because so many of the people seemed to be against it. He said at one point: "You can't sell at cost. Cooperative is not profit. The idea is to get you to run it." Then again: "I'm not a cooperative man. Here I am trying to persuade you to do it. Why the reluctance to form the Advisory Council?"

A great number of opinions were expressed showing no concern for the cooperative as a democratic organization or as a social movement, but insisting on the importance of low cost to the people. Many were against the co-op if it were going to mean more expenses to the people. One person wanted to know whether the WRA or the Army couldn't buy things more cheaply for the people than could a co-op. Someone else asked who would put the extra expense because co-ops would be bound to have more overhead than the present canteen. Many persons expressed the opinion that if the price were kept as low as possible, that was all that was necessary. As one Issei put

it: "How was the store run until now?" "Isn't it sufficient to keep the least money from going out from the men's pocket?" This short-range view of things and the harping on the economic insecurity of the people here have been evident in other issues, such as the theater project.

The opinion that the people should get all that they can from the WRA was expressed directly or indirectly by several persons. This is especially interesting in view of the fact that Japanese were known before evacuation to refuse public assistance in most cases.

The attitude of many Isseis toward the co-op was that they already knew a great deal about it, where, as a matter of fact, they seemed to know very little about it. This insistence on a knowledge of the co-op or the ability to get along without knowing very much was contrary to Elberson's desire for thorough education on the co-op and was to crop up again later on. One Issei who seemed to know more about co-ops than others, still showed that he didn't have a deep understanding of them as a social movement. He said "Kobai Kumiai" (consumer cooperatives) are popular in Japan, but we don't know how long we'll stay here. How are we going to split the \$2000 daily profit? There's no need to make so much profit. Why not lower the price. Why not get the refund as we go along?" He implied that there was no need to have the co-op.

The same gentleman said: "If we leave it (canteen) up to the Japanese, it's understood there would be a lot of criticisms." A woman co-op leader got up and demanded in English (the man had spoken in Japanese), "Is this gentleman saying that we Japanese aren't able to run a cooperative?" Immediately she had the wrath of a large part of the assembly on her. There were pre-testing mumbles throughout the hall. Some said that the man hadn't said any-

thing of the sort. This incident seems to reveal the touchiness of the Japanese people to criticisms, especially when it comes from the young people.

Several persons who took part in the discussion are worth mentioning. Elberson was patient throughout the meeting, trying to answer all of the questions that came up. He was probably rather discouraged by the stiff opposition he met to his plans to help the colonists set up a cooperative, preferably along the Rochdale plan. Smith seemed to be exasperated by the suspicion of the Japanese and put himself on Elberson's side in trying to bring out some of the advantages of a co-op. This good relation between Elberson and Smith was going to be broken later on. Collins did not say very much except to urge the people to study the co-op a little more. Tom Yego, a JACL leader from the Sacramento Valley was outspoken in his stand against the setting up of the co-op. His arguments were that "First, the WRA owes the evacuees all their needs since they were unvoluntarily uprooted from their established economy, and the cooperative program sidetracks this more basic issue; and, second, that the Japanese people would be held responsible under a cooperative plan should the stores fail as seems likely in view of the extremely low wages in contradication to the prevailing high prices."¹ Tom Yego was to voice his protest against the Co-op Movement still later on.

Nothing can be said about the differences of opinion within the group, except to say that the major split was between the Japanese and the Caucasian. Both Isseis and Niseis voiced their opinions against setting up of a cooperative, while a few from both groups favored such a plan. Sectional differences were not noted. The only notation that can be made at this point is that the Pinedale group which seems to be more favorable toward the Co-op Movement was not represented at this meeting.

The discussion was centered mainly around the cooperative plan until one

¹ F.M.

of the co-op leaders suggested that of the two plans presented by Mr. Elberson the one concerning the Advisory Committee be taken up first. This was done and the ways and means of establishing a co-op left for a later meeting. Even the Advisory Committee, which would only convey the wishes of the people to Mr. Smith, met with some opposition. Said one Nisei: "We are just unpacked. Everyone understands cooperatives. Inside here, however, we can't figure on a normal basis. Let's leave even the temporary board until further discussion." A vote was taken, however, and there were only five dissenting votes. It was decided that representatives from each ward would elect one person to sit on the Advisory Council. It was made clear that this Council was only temporary and that it was to operate only until the consumer cooperative was formed.

C. Activities of the Advisory Council

The Advisory Council was made up of the following:

Ward I	Horiuchi
Ward II	Ikeda
Ward III	Hitomi
Ward IV	Kubo
Ward V	Tomita
Ward VI	Taketa
Ward VII	Natsuhara

Almost all of the members of the Advisory Council spoke both English and Japanese, although Tomita and Natsuhara were the only two who could be called Niseis. The latter spoke no Japanese while Hitomi spoke only broken English. The meeting, interestingly enough, was carried on in English, except when it came to extremely technical matters. Tomita was one of Elberson's leaders, who was well informed on the co-op, and he was chairman for the Advisory Council in spite of his relative youth.

The first activity of the Advisory Council was to meet with Mr. Smith and the managers of the various stores and shops of Community Enterprises and find out how the enterprises were actually being run. How much profit there was,

how the price was marked, how the bills were paid, what expenses were paid by the Community Enterprises -- the first meeting was occupied largely with asking these questions.

Sandwiched in between these major questions were those dealing with the status of the Council, the Community Enterprises, Mr. Smith, and the future cooperative. Mr. Smith made it clear at the very beginning of the first meeting that unless the co-op was organized there could be no discussion of changing the present setup of the canteen. When the status of the Council was brought up, Mr. Smith stated that its task was to carry back necessary information and to bring in any questions that bothered the colonists.

This matter of status was the chief topic for discussion of the second Advisory Council meeting which met Sunday, August 5. The Council felt that it was not enough to function merely as an Advisory Board and that as long as Mr. Smith was the supervisor of the Community Enterprises, there would be complaints from the people. The members of the Council expressed the opinion that Mr. Smith's managers had no opinions of their own, but were under complete control of Mr. Smith. The main issue no longer was how they could advise Mr. Smith, but how soon the existing setup with Mr. Smith in control could be changed. It was the opinion of the Advisory Council even then that Mr. Smith should be retained in an advisory capacity only.

The Advisory Council had really no jurisdiction on the matter of forming a co-op, but their energies were centered in that direction. It was felt that a co-op plan, even though sketchy, should be presented to the co-op representatives immediately for their consideration. The Council thought it could work out the details first, and present them to co-op representatives for revision. The long-range educational program contemplated by Mr. Elberson was ignored. As an expediency, it was decided that co-op representatives would be asked to attend

Mr. Elberson's last lecture of the second series that was to be given that week. The secretary was asked to look into the legal phases of incorporation of a co-op.

On August 12, the Advisory Council met with the stated purpose of examining the books of the canteen, but most of the meeting was occupied with discussion centering around the co-op. A new complication had entered into this problem in the form of the City Council, which was made up of Mises and considered a political organization. Mr. Smith and Mr. Elberson assured the Advisory Council that it was as much a voice of the people as the Council. But ^{it} was brought up that the Council was the only recognized representative of the people which could have control of the profits from the canteen. However, if the cooperative should be organized both Mr. Smith and Mr. Elberson felt that the co-op would have a stronger claim on the profits than would the Council. Mr. Elberson was asked whether the people couldn't go ahead with the organization of the co-op and get their education on the co-op later on. Mr. Elberson tried to impress the importance of education on and understanding of the co-op before it was formed.

A decision was made by the Advisory Council to work on a set of proposed by-laws which would be taken back to the ward and discussed with co-op representatives before representing to the people. The set of by-laws was written up several nights later. The Advisory Council had become the co-op organization committee and plans for preliminary education were dispensed with. The Advisory function of the Council was forgotten when they took up the new task they were hardly prepared to tackle.

D. The Community Council Intervenes

At first the understanding was that the permanent Council would have

the power to distribute the profit from the canteen in any way it saw fit. Discussion was brought up in the Council on August 11 on whether it might not be a good idea for the Council to take over the co-op, too. The groups which made this proposition was composed of Walter Tsukamoto, Tom Yego, and Henry Taketa who were entrusted by the Council to work out a chart of city government organization. They argued that the Council was the rightful representative of the people. While opposed to them were Miyamoto, Takemoto, Mayeda, and others who feared that the Council and the whole community would be controlled by a small clique.¹

At the Ward II co-op meeting, Mr. Tsukamoto was present, and he broached the suggestion that the co-op might be taken over by the Council. His arguments, however, were clever. After saying that he thought the power of the people should not be divided, he said that he himself did not care who ran the co-op. Mr. Elberson was against the Council handling the co-op, he said, because Elberson was a co-op advisor and a failure to make a co-op would mean that he had failed in his work.

The point of view of the ward member on the Advisory Council was interesting. He maintained that the Advisory Council was willing to let the Council run the co-op if they so wished. But Mr. Smith had protested and had urged the Advisory Council to take over matters in the economic sphere. It was only then that the Advisory Council decided to go ahead with the organizing of the co-op. However, they were still willing to reconsider he said.

While the meeting was attended by both Isseis and Nisseis, the comments made were all against having the Council take over the Community Enterprises. One Issei mentioned that if the Council took over the co-op, then Isseis would

¹ F.M.'s Council Minutes, August 11, 1942.

be deprived of power. Tsukamoto answered that the Community Council does not mean to deprive Isseis of any power. Another man demanded to know whether they shouldn't do something if the Niseis were going to deny the Isseis any power at all. Tsukamoto then relinquished his argument somewhat and said that the Council only wanted the final say in legislative matters. This power of the Council was conceded by the others.

At this meeting it was thought desirable to ask the people in the block whether they desired to take over the co-op by themselves or let the Council take care of it. On the following night, however, at the Council Meeting the growing friction between Isseis and Niseis over the control of the co-op was brought out. This was felt to be unfortunate, and Walter himself got up and made a motion to have the Council divorce itself from the Community Enterprises, except for legislative powers. The motion was passed. Walter had reversed his stand and had put himself on record as favoring harmonious relations between the first and second generations. This is mentioned because he refers to this incident later on. Thus the brief intervention of the Council in the matter of the co-op was brought to an abrupt end, but it had served the purpose of spurring the co-op movement forward at a more rapid pace.

During the discussion of the Theater Project, it was revealed that "Mr. Shirrell had at previous occasions promised the fact that the Council will have a voice in the distribution of profits accumulated by the Community Enterprises until the permanent Council was established."² At the meeting on September 29, this was corrected to read: "...when the permanent

¹ Minutes of Council Meeting, August 18, 1942; also F.M.'s minutes.

² Special Council Meeting, September 26, 1942.

Council is established." This understanding seems to have been quite general, and at one time it was announced that the profits would be distributed by the Community Council. Mr. Shirrell, however, did not agree that he had made such a promise and said that the above statement should read as follows: "that until the co-op is organized, the profits of the Community Enterprise will continue to be under the management of the Community Enterprises."¹ According to Administrative instructions the latter would, of course, be the more correct statement for Mr. Shirrell to make. The Council was left only with legislative and taxation authority over the Community Enterprises.

E. Activities of Co-op Representatives

The temporary co-op representatives (the real representatives were to be elected later) had not had a meeting since they had elected an Advisory Council member from the ward. Most of the co-op representatives had only a vague idea about co-ops because they had not had an opportunity to hear very much about it. When a ward meeting was called by the Advisory Council member in that ward, the discussion was marked by confusion. Mr. Elberson had first planned that these ward meetings, which were to be educational in purpose, would be presided by a discussion leader who already had an understanding of the co-op. Members of the Advisory Council, however, felt that they were capable of leading the discussion. The combined meeting of Wards II and III on August 17 will be outlined to show some of the trends.

The meeting was co-chaired by two members from the Advisory Committee, Mr. Ikeda and Mr. Hitomi. First a report was given of the progress made by the Advisory Council thus far. It was brought out that the Advisory Council

¹ Council Minutes, September 29, 1942.

had pushed the progress of the organization of the co-op because they thought that an educational program would take too much time. There was a suggestion that the Advisory Council make a definite plan to present to the people. Mr. Hitomi said that the Advisory Council desired the approval of the people on the co-op before going ahead with the plans. Another question that came up during the discussion was whether the people desired the canteen or not. It was finally decided that co-op representatives would go back to their blocks and have the people decide on two questions:

1. Do the people want to have a canteen?
2. Do the people want to take over the canteen or do they want the Council to handle it?

The two chairmen could not answer satisfactorily many of the questions that were asked. Someone in the audience asked for a description of the co-op to present to the block people but the chairmen were unable to give it. Mr. Hitomi started to read a provisional by-law which he had, but admitted that he couldn't understand all of it very well. J.S. and Sumio Miyamoto, Niseis who had some understanding of the co-op, kept quiet during most of the discussion. It was being carried on wholly in Japanese and Isseis were doing all of the talking. Finally J.S. asked whether the group shouldn't learn a little more about co-ops, if they were to go back to their blocks to explain it to the people. Many agreed at this suggestion. It was a situation where Niseis had to tread with care. The two Issei leaders had proved inadequate in so far as their knowledge of the co-op went. But the younger people could not come right out and take away the leadership without causing resentment. Mr. Elberson had instructed several of the younger co-op leaders to help out in the discussion, but they had kept still most of the time. J. S. prevailed

upon Sumio Miyamoto, the business manager of the canteen, who spoke good Japanese, and who was respected by Isseis, to review the principles of the co-op. This he did to the satisfaction of all present.

In most of these ward meetings a decision was made to ask the people in the various blocks whether they were for a co-op or not. Many of the co-op representatives left the meeting with only a vague idea of what a co-op really was. Of the seven members of the Advisory Council, Tad Tomita, a Nisei who could speak Japanese and English well and who had an understanding of the co-op, was probably the only one who was able to carry on a discussion in his ward properly. The feeling of many of the Isseis seemed to be that Japanese could go ahead with the organization of a co-op without a majority of the people in the blocks understanding what it was about. There was also a feeling that Mr. Elberson was needlessly trying to slow up the organization of a co-op.

When Mr. Elberson heard that a vote was going to be taken to decide whether the people wanted a co-op or not he was alarmed. He felt that such final steps should not be taken without the people learning a little more about the co-op. He sent out notices to the co-op representatives to inform the block people of the organization of the Advisory Committee before taking up anything so formal as a vote. Many of the blocks, however, took a vote. Feeling that it was not wise to hold back the organization of the (co-op) any longer even though the educational program was not even started, Mr. Elberson asked each block to find out whether they were in favor of a co-op or not. In some of the blocks the principle of the co-op was well explained before the vote was taken. Most of the meetings were block meetings, while a few were only able to meet with the Advisory Committee. Also, not all of the blocks sent in formal reports of block opinions to the central office. Of those that did report definitely 35 answered yes and only one (Block 25) replied that some questions would have to be answered before they could make

their decision. The majority of the blocks had reported in favor of the Japanese forming a cooperative and taking over the Community Enterprises. The Advisory Council had received the go signal that it had desired.

At the same time the blocks were asked whether they felt that they had sufficient education on the co-op. Of the handful that answered, most of them said that more knowledge about the co-op was desired in the block. Mr. Elberson had also won his point on the desirability of more education.

F. Argument for and against the co-op

After the ward meeting was held, meetings were held in each block to explain the principle of the co-op to the people and to get their approval. More than half of these blocks answered in favor of the Co-op Movement in spite of the incomplete explanation by co-op representatives in most blocks. What convinced the people of the necessity for a co-op? Also, what were some of the questions asked and doubts raised by the people in the blocks?

The amount of profit possible was an important factor, but not the most important in determining whether the people wanted a co-op or not. Co-op representatives had to maintain that prices would probably remain about the same (10 per cent markup), but that past profits would go to the members. One of the other strong arguments for the co-op was that if the people wanted a store at all, they would have to form a co-op. The WRA could not run a store, private enterprise was not allowed, and the only alternative remained a cooperative organization. In many of the blocks this argument was probably used, even though it did not rest on the merits of a co-op. The most important argument, however, was the fact that a co-op would give members entire control over the organization. This control was not thought in terms of consumer vs. business men, but in terms of Japanese vs. Caucasian, especially Mr. Smith. The suspicion of the people had been centered on him,

and the general feeling was that the only way in which to take the Community Enterprises out of his hands was to form a co-op. This feeling was to become more widespread and stronger when the Theater Project was announced.

In spite of the lack of an educational program, many of the objections raised by co-op representatives at the first meeting to form a cooperative organization had been eliminated. The suspicion toward the WRA cropped up in most meetings, and it had to be explained time and again that the WRA, under its regulations, could not operate a consumer business organization. In one "reactionary" block, (Block 25) the co-op principles were explained and the people agreed with them in principle, but would not vote for a co-op until certain questions were answered. One point was that the co-op couldn't be expected to make a profit if it had to pay the rent, wages, and other expenses. Also, in the winter time there would be less profit than in the summer time. The feeling was that the WRA should pay the expenses of the canteen. One person asked why the farm was not turned over to the Japanese. Someone thought that it was going to be eventually. Another person mentioned that the farmers couldn't make a profit because ten workers didn't do the work of one. Other pet protests such as "We're being treated like Indians;" "They should take us back to Stockton;" "I can't consider this my home;" "The WRA should pay the expenses of the canteen because they put us in here;" were voiced by several of the more vociferous Isseis. Their argument dominated the meeting and even though the co-op was accepted in principle, the group did not vote in favor of it at that meeting. The fear that it would not be possible to make a profit persisted. There was still a desire to get as much out of the WRA as possible, and there was a feeling that if they held out long enough the WRA would not expect the co-op to pay any of the expenses. Since the first meeting, however, the Co-op Movement had made progress in eliminating most of this

sort of objections among a majority of the people.

It should be noted here that in Block 25 it was always four or five people in the Advisory Committee or in the block who did most of the talking, usually opposing most of the constructive measures that were presented. At this particular meeting they gave vent to their indignation at the way they had been treated. They also expressed the opinion that since they were put in here the WRA should take care of them. With this sort of talk dominating the meeting, even Mr. Sakamoto, the Co-op leader, was forced to go along with the rest and express the opinion that he could not consider this his home. During the discussion the merits and demerits of a co-op had been forgotten, and the dissatisfaction felt by the Japanese people was brought into the limelight. This swayed the group to such an extent that it made the approval of the Co-op Movement difficult. This is mentioned at this point because so many of the other meetings have been dominated by this sort of rule of the emotion, whipped up by a small minority, over a saner discussion of the issues at stake.

G. Dissolving of the Preliminary Co-op Organization

The majority of the block, and hence the people, had approved of the organization of a co-op, and the representatives were prepared to go ahead with the organization. As the present representatives were, for the most part, appointed by the block managers or the block Advisory Committee, it was necessary to replace them with representatives elected by the people. At the same time it was decided that the Advisory Council would also be dissolved and soon be replaced by the Board of Directors elected by co-op representatives. The advisory function of the Advisory Council had been entirely forgotten, and when the theater issue came up, the co-op group was to have no representative body to look into the matter.

At the final ward meeting of co-op representatives, tentative by-laws were presented by the member of the Advisory Council and discussed. There was a feeling among the representatives that this discussion should be done by the

real co-op representatives to be elected soon, although it was Mr. Elberson's surmise that most of the present co-op representatives would be reelected from each block. Discussion of the by-laws was, therefore, rather superficial. Several interesting opinions, however, were revealed.

At the Ward II meeting, it was the desire of most of those present that the membership fee should be as low as possible. One dollar seemed to gain the approval of most, while it was thought sufficient to have the members pay up only about 50 cents. This was contrary to the wish of Mr. Elberson, who felt that a larger membership fee would create more interest in the co-op. There was also a feeling that the profits should not be distributed only to the members, but should be distributed to the community as a whole. This again was contrary to Rochdale principles which believed that it was important to keep the interest of members of a cooperative by returning the profits in proportion to the amount of purchase. If the profits were to be used for the benefit of the community, there would be no advantage in becoming a member. There was also a feeling that profits would be small as the price would have to be kept down as low as possible for the sake of the people. This solicitude for the welfare of the people of the community was a definite trend in the discussion in one ward meeting.

The Advisory Council had proved to be of little value in learning about the co-op and extending knowledge of it to the people. For this reason, Mr. Elberson and his assistant, Fumi Sakamoto, felt that it was advisable to have an advisory committee "whose purpose is to make critical analysis of the progress of the co-operative to coordinate information submitted by the various committees, work out procedure in advance and in consulting with the store manager if it affects the business policy of the store, and to advise the Board of Directors."¹

¹ Cooperative Plan.

The feeling was that if the Board of Directors knew as little about co-ops as did the Advisory Council, it would not be able to function properly. At the ward meeting, however, most of the co-op representatives felt that such a committee was not necessary. Suspicion was aroused as to how much power the WRA and Mr. Smith did have over the co-op and whether the co-op was really going to be run by the Japanese people. It was felt that the fifteenth person on the Board of Directors, who was to be a Caucasian staff member, would be sufficient voice for the Administration to have in the co-op. In other words, the Advisory Committee was thought to be unnecessary.

Co-op representatives were instructed to have an election in each block to elect representatives; and the meeting was adjourned. At the same time the Advisory Council was automatically dissolved.¹

H. Co-op Leaders

Several co-op leaders, all Niseis, had attended Elbertson's lecture series or had previous knowledge of the Co-op Movement. Most of them were college men who had a vision of some of the broader implications of the Co-op Movement in Tule Lake. The co-operative association as a method of meeting post-war relocation problems and as a means for a racial minority group to break into the Caucasian world were more important to these people than just the matter of whether the Japanese or the Caucasians controlled the co-op here or how the profit was distributed.

Heading this informal staff of discussion leaders was Fumi Sakamoto, Mr. Elbertson's assistant. She was vitally interested in the Co-op Movement, and helped Mr. Elbertson work out many of the technical details of the organization. Many of the ideas which were presented to the Advisory Council were often

¹J. S. Minutes of Ward II Co-op Meeting.

either Sakamoto's or Elbersen's.

Sakamoto came from San Francisco, was once married, and at present is probably in her late twenties. According to her own story she has always lived among Caucasians as a dressmaker. Her speaking ability of Japanese is not highly polished but not too poor. When she first entered the Project, her attitude tended to be blunt and to antagonize the Japanese people. Through her contacts, however, she has learned to be more tactful and even to flatter people. She seems to get along quite well with the people about her at present. She can get a job with a business firm out East through a Caucasian friend of hers. However, she is thinking of attending Rochdale Institute in New York to receive training and make contacts which may help the Japanese later on. Her attitude probably has been greatly influenced by that of Elbersen, with whom she worked intimately. His true adherence to democratic principles in his contact with Japanese probably set an ideal pattern for Sakamoto to follow.

Elbersen and Sakamoto consulted the discussion leaders from time to time. These included Haruo Najima, Bob Ots, Sumio Miyamoto, Mas Kawate, Tad Tomita, Ted Tokuno, and James Sakoda. On plans for organizing the education program and steering the direction of discussion at ward meetings these people were consulted. Several informal meetings were held with Elbersen and Sakamoto to discuss some of these plans, while the other times the latter two went to see the others. Originally one person was assigned to each ward and was asked to lead the discussion on co-ops, as members of the Advisory Council were poorly informed on this subject. Although it was Elbersen's plan to have these discussion leaders carry on the educational program, the Advisory Council was allowed to go ahead with its own program and also to chair the ward meetings. At the last meeting of the temporary co-op representatives, the discussion leaders were asked to stress the importance of an advisory body to the Board of Directors, but they were helpless to do very much about it, because most of the others

seemed to be opposed to such a plan. This group, however, was able to do something of which the Advisory Council could not readily be made to see the importance -- mainly, laying a stress on understanding the principle of the co-op and also in bringing back to Elberson some of the reaction of the people which he could not observe or understand for himself. The value of this group was during the period of preliminary organization, and after that it did not convene again as a group. Some of the individuals, however, functioned to keep the co-op central office informed of the feeling of the people.

IV. ACTUAL ORGANIZATION

A. Election Meeting

For the next few weeks election of co-op representatives were held in various blocks. There were delays in some blocks, as there were still doubts among the people which could not be dispelled in a short explanation before the election. Between September 3 and September 26, all of the blocks except two had chosen their co-op representatives -- preferably one Issei and one Nisei. Not until then did Elberson feel that he should go ahead with the electing of the incorporators who would file incorporation papers.

In Block 25 which had not formally approved the setting up of a co-op, both of the co-op representatives were reelected as co-op representatives, but not without some feeling of doubt as to the advisability of having a co-op in the Project. People who attended the meeting wanted to know whether they shouldn't first ask the people whether they wanted a co-op or not before they elected a representative. It was explained that it would be the work of the new representatives to find out from the people whether a co-op was really desirable. When the question about the possibility of profits was brought up, it had to be explained that people didn't have to become members if they didn't want to.

The block manager helped along the matter by explaining that electing of representatives did not mean that a co-op was going to be put up yet. After the election the people were asked whether they desired a canteen or not. After some discussion, the following points were brought out.

1. The canteen is necessary
2. It should be taken over by the Japanese people
3. Definite plan of the co-op should be submitted to the people for approval

4. The expenses of the canteen should be partially met by the WRA

By delaying the final decision on the desirability of a co-op, the representatives of Block 25 were able to go ahead with the others in helping to organize the co-op.

B. Lecture Series

In the meantime Elbersson started a new series of lectures on the principles of the co-op one night a week. Fifteen to thirty representatives attended these lectures. As both Isseis and Niseis were present, language difficulty became a problem from the very first meeting. At the end of the first lecture, Shirai, a young Issei student at Stanford, was asked to translate what Elbersson had given in his lecture. Another Issei (Donao), however, got up and called everyone's attention to the fact that this was not a meeting just for Niseis and that Japanese was as important as English. He thought that there wasn't a Nisei who couldn't understand Japanese, and therefore felt that everyone should remain behind to hear the lecture in Japanese. He was calmed down, however, and the Niseis were allowed to go home first. Henceforth, all of the lectures by Mr. Elbersson were translated to Japanese at the end. These meetings were also characterized by a lack of interest in abstract principles. While the lecture

was mainly about principles, the questions asked concerned such practical aspects as marketing, insurance, reserve funds, profits. Some were eager to go ahead with the organization and were unwilling to attend to lectures.¹

C. Forum on Co-op

As a part of the educational program a forum on the co-op was sponsored by co-op leaders (Elberson and Sakamoto). For this, two persons who were known to be against the Co-op Movement, Norman Koyama and Tom Yego were secured as speakers. As men favoring the co-op, Sumio Miyamoto and Frank Miyamoto were asked to speak. Don Elberson also sat on the panel and gave the history of the Co-op Movement and its meaning for the people. The audience which only half filled a mess hall was largely Nisei.

The meaning of the co-op for the Japanese people, which Elberson presented, was: (1) that it was the WRA policy to give the people increasing management of the project, and that the co-op was the first real opportunity for the Japanese people to run their own enterprise, and (2) that the co-op stands for racial equality. Elberson had learned during his contact with the people here that the latter argument would appeal to the Japanese more than other abstract principles which were more often quoted in favor of the co-op. In his review of the Co-op Movement in the Project, he said that the by-laws were the result of the thinking of the people.

Tom Yego's speech brought out some interesting points. He started out by saying that he didn't receive his degree at Cal or Stanford, but by digging on his farm back home. His statements were characterized by lack of knowledge. For instance, he stated that if the co-op took over the Community Enterprises, it would have to raise its price, which was not true. He also expressed

¹ J. S. Journal, September 16, 1942.

suspicion of the sincerity of the WRA officials. He said that policies of the WRA kept changing and couldn't be trusted. For instance, they had promised the people a producers' co-op which we could not have. He felt that the people shouldn't be required to take over the consumer cooperative and not the producers' cooperative. His logic was evidently not very clear here. Yego directed his questions at Sumio Miyamoto. This is interesting because when the matter of Council controlling the co-op was brought up, the former had been for it and the latter opposed it.

From the questions it could be seen that the opposition to the co-op was by a bare minority of the audience. Most of the objections raised at the first meeting of co-op representatives had been dispelled to a large extent. In spite of the poorly organized education carried on by the co-op leaders, it had apparently had some effect. One fear which those for the co-op seemed to have was the fact that even if the co-op took over the Community Enterprises, it probably would not be able to lower the present prices at all and even might have to raise them if the WRA refused Community Enterprise employees and their dependents clothing allowances which other workers were to receive. This fear was important because it set the stage for the Theater Project controversy which was to arise soon after.

One bright aspect of this forum was the broad outlook with which the cooperative was viewed by a few of the Nisei leaders. Frank Miyamoto in his talk pointed out the value of the co-op in creating harmony between Isseis and Niseis, in educating the people in democracy, and in post-war adjustment. Yoshimi Shibata asked whether or not the Co-op Movement here would be strong enough to help the Japanese people tide over difficulties after the war. The possibility of interproject co-op was discussed by Mr. Elberson. These broad

outlooks, which really gave co-ops their real value to the Japanese people, had hardly been touched upon in discussion groups predominated by Isseis. While Isseis had spoken of saving money for the day when they would be going out of here, there had been no vision of greater cooperation among themselves or with members of other races.

One interesting incident occurred during the discussion. Mr. Kallam, a Caucasian member of the agricultural staff, got up and remarked that over a million dollars worth of produce was produced on the farm here, but the public refused to handle them because they were produced by Japanese. This condition existed only at the outset when there was a lack of buyers, but later there was no trouble in finding buyers. This remark was circulated throughout the Project, however, and later attributed to Shirrell. One of the staff members asked Shirrell whether he had said anything of the sort, and Mr. Shirrell denied that he had. So the rumor was allowed to circulate freely even though it was known to be false.¹

D. Koso Takemoto

Realizing the language handicap under which he worked, Mr. Elbertson secured the services of Koso Takemoto. Koso was a Kibei educated at the University of California. He could handle both Japanese and English very well. Moreover he was not in sympathy with the JACL leaders which most almost a necessary qualification, as the Civic Organization Office was anti-JACL in its sentiments. Koso's understanding of the Isseis as well as the Niseis and his being a Christian leader were to his advantage in his new work. Without trouble he was able to coordinate the ideals of the co-op (democratic principles), his

¹ J. S. Journal, September 21, 1942.

sympathy for Isseis, and his Christian leanings.

E. Theater Project

The proposed Theater Project brought out rather clearly the growing split between Isseis and Niseis and also the relationship between the Co-op and the Council. For this reason, it should be treated more fully as a separate incident, but here its effect on the organization of the co-op and the reaction taken by members of this movement will be discussed.

On September 25, the central co-op office (staffed by Elberson, Fumi, and Koso) knew that Mr. Smith had contracted for a theater building and equipment as one of the Community Enterprises. Until then no one seemed to have suspected that such a project was being contemplated. There had been talks about having a theater, Elberson and others admitted, but there was a talk of so many things. Sumio Miyamoto, the business manager of the Community Enterprises, said he did not know anything about the Theater Project until about this time. Both Mr. Elberson and Mr. Collins, co-op leader from the Regional Office in San Francisco, indignantly pointed out that according to the by-laws of the WRA, Mr. Smith only had authority to help the Japanese people in running the Community Enterprises. Administrative Instruction No. 26, issued on August 25, had this to say about temporary enterprises:
 "Operation procedure shall follow as closely as possible, the procedure provided for permanent enterprises."
 "The existing net worth of the temporary community enterprises now in operation in certain relocation centers belongs to the evacuees. This fund shall be paid over in full to the permanent consumer cooperative association upon its organization."

The first reaction of the co-op leaders was that of indignation because Mr. Smith had gone ahead without consulting the people or the co-op leaders. Part of this, however, was based on the fact that this Theater Project trans-

ferred with the organization of the permanent co-op. The organization meeting had not been held yet, and there were doubts among the colonists as to the advisability of the Japanese people taking over the Community Enterprises. With the added burden of the Theater Project being thrust upon the Japanese people without their consent, the people made objection to the co-op entirely. Elbersen wanted to go ahead with the election of the Board of Directors as soon as possible before things became worse. Later in the day it was decided that this matter would be brought up at the Council Meeting, and the co-op people would act as if they knew nothing about this project.¹

Koso was instrumental in executing this political move to take the attention of the people off of the co-op.

On the following day the Council had a special meeting to discuss this matter. Mr. Kendall Smith, Mr. Elbersen, and Mr. Collins were present. Mr. Smith was questioned as to his reason for making plans for a Theater Project without consulting the people. He replied that there had been many requests for a theater, in the first place. No one had criticized him when he had bought the equipment for the barber shop and other Community Enterprises, and he didn't see why he should have consulted the people because the theater wasn't any different from these other enterprises. The reservation of the movie equipment had been made in August, while the contract for the lumber was made before the freezing order on lumber went into effect on September 7. He also stated that the WRA had never promised an auditorium and that the WRA had set a ceiling of \$200 for any amusement building. The movie equipment and lumber were reported to have cost \$6,000, which could be paid off in about four months with an admission fee of about 35 cents. After that the price would be lowered to 20 cents for adults and 10 cents for children. Mr. Smith ended

by saying: "I'm not interested in anything that won't bring you people some kind of return. I'm not here to make any money for myself, or for the WRA. I'm here to serve you people as best I can, that's my job. That's all I've got to say."

One interesting aspect of the ensuing discussion was Walter Tsukamoto's attack on the Co-op Advisory Council. He asked Mr. Smith whether he had consulted the Co-op Advisory Council on this matter. Mr. Smith answered that he had asked some of them, but that he couldn't see them all. Then he said: "But Elberson can tell you the answer to your question."

Elberson, as he related later, could not very well turn around and call a fellow Caucasian staff member a liar. He merely stated that the Advisory Council was an appointed body and they had disbanded before this matter had come up. Hence the body did not exist as an official Advisory Council and could not have been consulted on the matter.

Then Walter retaliated by saying that the Advisory Council was an elected body. (As a matter of fact it was elected, but the original cooperative representatives who chose them were appointed so that the Advisory Council could not be considered a representative body). They had chosen to dissolve itself. "I don't know what these Isseis, who have been so critical of our activities in the Council, must have thought of themselves. Maybe they were just wall-flowers to decorate the place. Those ~~man~~ should have been on the job so that Mr. Smith could refer just such problems as these to them. I think we should place the responsibility for the present mistake directly on the shoulders of the Advisory Council. And in my way of thinking, we should squash the resolution which we made to divorce the Council from Community Enterprises, and take the enterprises back over our wings where it properly belongs. Many of you criticized our suggestion to retain the Community Enterprises under the

Council, but this mistake would never have happened if we had retained control of the Community Enterprises."

During the discussion Tsukamoto and Yego were trying to blame the Co-op Advisory Council. Takeda pointed out that the Council was not to blame for the trouble as it had divorced itself from the Community Enterprises entirely. Elbersen, Takemoto and Miyamoto tried to defend the Advisory Council by saying that all the power they had was to listen to what Mr. Smith had to tell them and relate this message back to the people. In this effort to pin the responsibility on to someone, the split between the JACL leaders and the more liberal co-op leaders became evident. Elbersen could not very well come out and accuse Mr. Smith. Finally, however, Mr. Smith himself came out and accepted the blame:

"Look here. I'm not asking you to blame the co-op or anyone else. I do not think it is cricket to blame the Co-op Advisory Board. If you want to hold anyone responsible, I'm the one who's responsible. Mr. Elbersen is right when he says that the Advisory Council had no authority in this matter."

Another point of importance that Mr. Smith brought up during the discussion was the fact that he had built the theater on Mr. Shirrell's order. "I had my orders from Mr. Shirrell, so I went ahead and bought the necessary equipment." By this statement, the suspicion of Isseis that Shirrell was trying to "put something over" on the people before they took over the Community Enterprise had a good basis. Most Niseis, however, seemed to have ignored this point which was to be so strongly stressed by Isseis.

The Council decided that the matter would be referred to the people before they made a decision on the matter.¹

After the meeting, Elbersen was fuming with anger. "I don't believe in physical violence," he said, "but Walter's an exception." Elbersen was

¹ F. M. Minutes of Council Meeting, September 26; Council Minutes September 26.

anxious to go ahead with the organization of the co-op as soon as possible. Mr. Collins said that the only thing wrong with Mr. Smith's move was one of timing. Formerly the people had not been prepared to discuss the matter of how the Community Enterprise should be run. At present, however, the people were ready to take over the enterprise and expect to be consulted on the matter.

When the people learned of the possibility of a theater, some Isseis were heard expressing delight in the matter until they were told that it was going to be built with the people's money. There was a feeling that it wasn't fair to use the people's money without consulting them first, and also they felt suspicious that the administration was trying to put something over on them by going ahead with the construction before the co-op was set up. Full discussion on the Theater Project, however, was prevented by the intrusion of the Broadcast Affair, which was of much greater importance, as far as the interest of the people went. This was favorable for the Co-op Movement because it gave it a chance to proceed with its organization without the Theater Project uppermost on the minds of the people. Also, the Broadcast Affair was settled in a manner which made many Niseis lose respect for the Isseis. The welfare of the Nisei was not considered when many Isseis argued heatedly against the Broadcast, and the issue was settled at block meetings which were dominated by Isseis. At the next Council meeting opinions were expressed that councilmen were being merely messenger boys. The antagonism by the Isseis and Niseis was rising and when the Theater Project was again brought up as an issue after the Broadcast Affair was settled, it turned the tide in favor of the co-op.

On October 6, the Council decided to have a committee investigate the Theater Project. At the meeting following the committee gave its report. It was revealed that the admission could be reduced to 15 cents and 5 cents. Koso suggested that this matter be taken back to the various blocks to be decided

upon, but very few councilmen were with him. The Council decided that it didn't have to take back every issue to the people. A motion was made to recommend the construction of the theater, and it was passed by about 5 to 1 majority.

The indignation of the Issei was immediate. . . (October 20, 1942.) His anger toward Mr. Smith was temporarily forgotten, although it probably resided just below the surface of consciousness. The main attack was made on the Council, which had ignored the opinion of the Issei and had gone ahead of their own accord. During the discussion in various places, several points were brought out. First, the Isseis seem to feel the action of the Council as a personal affront. There was a feeling of humiliation or even persecution. Secondly, there was a great deal of harping on the expense of the theater to the people, and the adverse moral and educational value of it for children. These seem to constitute the ostensive reasons for Isseis being against the Theater Project. Thirdly, the Council and Mr. Shirrell came in for a great deal of criticism. The criticism against Mr. Shirrell was not voiced openly at public meetings, but it was unmistakably involved. With these two under fire, Mr. Smith was temporarily forgotten. These attacks seem to indicate the more basic reasons for protest against the Theater Project.

On October 9, Block 25 had a meeting to discuss, among other problems, the Theater Project. Several of the Isseis were evidently prepared to attack the councilman verbally. As soon as the questioning period came, a barrage of questions were hurled at him. The council man, Mr. Yagi, was in his late twenties and a former JACL leader in the Delta region. He spoke Japanese fairly well, and was almost as willing to agree with Isseis as with Niseis. He did not express any opinions at council meetings and came back to the block and made only superficial reports, often inaccurate. He was the sort that was willing to move with the crowd. On the issue of the Theater Project he knew that his block was overwhelmingly against it. When the vote came up in the Council, he didn't

want to vote no because so many were for it. So he ended up by not voting at all. He was questioned by Isseis on this score, and there was an uproar because he had not voted at all. They were evidently very angry. Some one in the back of the room shouted that he should resign. J.S. who was acting as the secretary whispered to Yagi and told him to resign. When the latter got up and said that he wanted to quit his work because he was not capable of carrying it on, those who had attacked him the most told him jokingly that he should stay in office and "take" more of it. Since everyone seemed to want him to stay in office, Yagi said no more. Face had been saved on both sides. The Isseis were evidently very much pleased with themselves. A few began to tell the council man how he should have voted in a situation where his block was against a motion. For a while it was as if the father was explaining to a docile son where he had erred. This relationship seemed to please the Isseis very much. Mr. Yagi just kept still and listened.

The Council as a body also came in for its share of criticism. Someone asked why the Council voted for the theater against the wish of the block. Others demanded to know whether it was right for the Council to go ahead and make decisions by itself. Another wanted to know why councilmen were elected by the people if they were not going to represent the opinion of the people. Many demanded to know if it were all right for the Council to settle matters by private opinion. Mr. Yagi explained that the majority of the Councilmen were against taking the matter back to the block. The reason he explained as follows:

"The Council decided that it would cost only 84 cents per person, and it is not too much to spend for recreation. Especially in the winter time there would not be very many recreations going on. Also, there was an opinion that it would not be well to take each little matter back to the block.

Since the Advisory Committee are all Isseis, and they oppose anything that is brought up, they decided that small matters should be settled by the Council."

Although Mr. Shirrell did not figure largely in the Theater Project, he came up for discussion. One man asked whether it was true that Mr. Shirrell had said at a Council meeting that it was because the Council took matters back to the block that the Council was not able to do anything. The Council is recognized, he is supposed to have said, while the block meetings are not. Mr. Yagi was not aware that Mr. Shirrell had stated anything of the sort. A council man in the audience clarified the issue by saying that Mr. Shirrell had stated that there was no provisions made for block meetings.

The feeling of being hurt or ignored or even persecuted was definitely expressed. One man said: "It's a great mistake for Niseis to decide things for themselves. It's because of the Isseis that Niseis can get along at present."

Another man who referred to Shirrell added: "Why did the administration allow free election if he's (Shirrell) going to say such a thing. Why should we vote for representatives? We Isseis are being persecuted. We should do something about it now. Why cannot the representatives go back to the block and have things discussed?"

Another said: "If what Mr. Yagi said is true then the representatives are working for the administration to persecute the Isseis."

When the people were asked specifically why they were opposed to the theater, they gave economic and educational reasons as the main arguments. One man said that the hall was too small to be of any use. Said one man:

"From the standpoint of education, American movies can not be good. Japanese movies may be good. But I believe most Isseis are against having American movies."

Another person harped on the ruin it would bring to many families who

had very little money and many children. He said that there would be serious consequences if a theater were built.

When finally a vote was taken on the matter, it was found that 34 were opposed to the theater while the council man did not even bother to take a vote on those favoring the theater.

During the discussion the co-op representatives brought out the fact that it was because the Japanese people had not taken over the co-op that this trouble had occurred. This point was brought home strongly; the action taken by the Council had worked in favor of the Co-op Movement. When the co-op representatives gave their reports on the incorporators' meeting there were no difficult questions asked. This happened in spite of the fact that the people were given to understand that they would be further consulted before the co-op was actually set up. The co-op was becoming an actual fact with their tacit consent. The only person who was questioned was Mr. Smith, whom the block people felt should not be allowed to handle any of the outside buying. Said one suspicious man:

"He's going to make money. Don't let him go out. He probably took money out of the theater project ... The Japanese are honest."¹

On Sunday, October 11, the Isseis gathered together representatives from various blocks and had a meeting of their own on the Theater Project. When a block by block roll/call was taken it was found that 30 odd blocks were opposed to the Theater Project, while only about 3 answered favorably. The rest of the blocks were undecided or not represented. After some discussion, the body decided that the Council would be asked to reconsider its decision on the Theater Project. There was also a note of threat in the opinions expressed

¹ J.S. Journal, October 9, 1942

that if the Council did not reconsider or did not reconsider in a proper manner there would be trouble.¹

On October 13 the Council met and decided that the Theater Project would be referred to the people. Mr. Shirrell, who was present at the meeting, offered to carry out the referendum himself, as the Council had already made a decision on the matter. It seemed that Mr. Shirrell did not want the Council to "lose face" with the people.²

F. Organization of the Tule Lake Cooperative Association

In the meantime the Co-op Movement was able to proceed without being hampered by the Theater Project. In fact, because the Council mishandled it and incurred the wrath of the Isseis, and because Mr. Smith was brought up in a bad light, leaders in the Co-op Movement were able to say: "All of this would not have happened if the people had taken over the Community Enterprise. Through the issue of the Theater Project a wedge between the administration and the Co-op Movement seems to have become felt by many people. The former suspicion that the administration was trying "to put something over" on the people by making them take over the Community Enterprises seems to have been largely forgotten.

On September 28 the General Assembly of all co-op representatives was called together. Every block except two had finally elected their co-op representatives. Questions were asked concerning the Theater Project, but Elberson avoided making definite statements. He said that he did not know very much about the matter, but that if the representatives did not want to take over the Theater Project and the WRA officials were not willing to back down on their decision to build it, then the people could have no co-op.

¹ J.S. Journal, October 11, 1942.

² Council Minutes, October 11, 1942.

Mr. Elberson gave a brief history of the Cooperative Movement in Tule Lake and then explained the organization. The Board of Members would probably meet two times a month. The membership fee would be about a dollar. There would be one member of the administrative staff on the Board of Directors. Mr. Smith would be the advisory and would probably also do the outside buying. There was very little questioning, but one man asked if the WRA advisors would have the power of spending any of the profit, and the answer from Elberson was that the Board of Directors would have all of the power.

After the discussion the assembly broke up into ward groups for selecting officers. First a chairman and a secretary were elected. In most cases the chairman was an Issei and the secretary a Nisei. Also a member for the By-Laws Committee and for the Committee on Community Works were elected. Also, nominations were held for incorporators, the election to be held at the next ward meeting. In Ward II, it was decided that some refreshments would be served and introduction of nominees would be held at the following meeting.

During the next few days most of the wards were able to hold meetings and elect incorporators, one Issei and one Nisei, who were eventually to become the Board of Directors. Ward V, however, met some opposition and had to clarify matters about the possibility of profit before they could elect their incorporators and could not send official incorporators to the first meeting of the incorporators held on October 5. The chairman of the ward resigned and so did several members because they did not have the backing of the people. By the next week they had elected their incorporators, but the co-op leaders were paying special attention to that ward to get it organized and to try to get the people in the block to take more interest in the Co-op Movement. (Why this ward is poor should be traced.)

At the meeting held in Ward II the matter of language was brought up.

The chairman thought that Japanese should be used rather than English because more of the members understood Japanese. Most of the Isseis were in favor of this. Mr. Donao, who had brought the matter of language up at Mr. Elberson's lecture series, felt that it was rare to find any Japanese who could not speak Japanese. The chairman recognized, however, that Niseis were put at a disadvantage when they had to speak in Japanese. The Niseis present at the meeting did not say a word about this matter. It was left up to a young educated Issei to propose that whichever language was most suitable be allowed to be used. Actually most of the discussion was carried on in Japanese, with Nisei expressing very few opinions. When the argument became heated and their interest was at stake some of the Niseis were to use English in expressing their point of view.

The introduction of nominees for incorporators proceeded smoothly. Whoever knew the nominees got up and said a few words of their background. One Issei suggested that the incorporator be appointed, but this was not taken up. There was no trouble in electing an Issei incorporator, although it was necessary to vote twice to secure a majority vote. On this point the group was uncertain as to whether plurality vote was permissible and the secretary suggested a majority vote. For the Nisei incorporator, it came out a tie both times between Araki and Sakoda. To break this tie one Issei suggested that the tie be broken by the younger person yielding to the older, according to Japanese custom. As no one seemed to know what else could be done to break the tie, since the chairman had already voted, this suggestion was accepted and Araki was elected.

Incorporation papers were being drawn up by the incorporators, while the By-Law Committee began to work on actual by-laws to be presented to the

people. At the same time the Committee on Committee Works began to work on various committees which would have to function to keep the cooperative working smoothly. Ward meetings of representatives were to be held regularly on Thursday nights. Thus we leave the Co-op Movement in Tule Lake at the beginning of October well on its way to becoming an actuality. Several weeks more would be required for the incorporation and taking over of the Community Enterprises. Even from the time of the first meeting of co-op leaders on July 22, it had taken over two months to organize the cooperative association. For the incorporation to be completed, it would take at least three months in all.

V. SPECIAL PROBLEM

Sectional Differences

Concerning sectional differences, Fumi Sakamoto has this to say. People from Sacramento generally seem to have had more oppositions to a co-op than some of the other sections. Wards VI and VII which came from Pinedale are very much in favor of the cooperative. They have good leadership material and have promised a membership of 90 per cent of the ward. Fumi attributes much of this difference between the Northwest and Sacramento people's attitude toward the co-op on different sort of experience with cooperatives. The Sacramento people, she said, on the whole have had unfortunate experiences with producers' co-ops, while the people from the Northwest have had more success with them. Ward V, made up largely of people from the white zone, is difficult to say at present why its response to the co-op is so poor.

VI. ANALYSIS

So far the study of the Co-op Movement has proved very fruitful in yielding rich and varied information. For this reason it should be studied further. Some of the issues worth following would include the following:

1. Case Histories

JACL clique

Walter Tsukamoto

Tom Yego (he left for the beet field)

Henry Takeda

Liberal Group

Yoshimi Shibata

Koso Takemoto

Co-op Leader

Fumi Sakamoto

Koso Takemoto

Community Enterprises

Sumio Miyamoto

2. Sectional Differences

3. Issei - Nisei Relationship

4. Co-op - Council Struggle

5. Issei Customs

6. Attitudes, especially "reactionary" Isseis

7. Caucasian - Japanese relationship

Mr. Elberson

Mr. Smith

Mr. Shirrell

8. Ward II Co-op Meetings

9. The following should be written up separately:

Theater Project

Broadcast Affair

Council

Block 25

10. Comparison of wards.