

He lauded the earnest effort made by the residents of many blocks to launch community representation in accordance with the outlined plan; and stated, "It is obvious that unless the residents are virtually unanimous in their participation in the selection of the Representative Committee, then the committee cannot be truly representative."

In conclusion he expressed the belief that the formation of the representative body should be postponed until a more favorable date "in fairness to the entire community."

#### WRA TAKES OVER STOCKADE

On May 25 it was announced in the Newell Star, that WRA had taken over complete charge of the stockade. Nothing is known at present on the reasons Washington or the local Administration had for doing this.

#### WRA IN COMPLETE CHARGE OF STOCKADE ADMINISTRATION

The WRA is now in complete charge of the administration of the segregated area within the center, it was announced by Project Director Ray R. Best on Wednesday. This area which has been commonly termed the "stockade" had been established by the Army authorities and administered by the Army prior to this time. As stated in the NEWELL STAR last week, releases have been made from the area to the residence section of the center by a WRA committee working with Army officials.

The administration of the segregated area by the WRA as announced by the Project Director means that complete supervision will be in the hands of the project officials. This will include mess operation and arrangements for medical and other necessary services.

Fifteen of the internees also requested legal counsel at this time.<sup>1</sup> Getting assistance in this matter took some time. The internees' relatives were, for the most part, quite ignorant of legal matters and did not know to whom to turn. Consulting the project attorney, they felt was out of the question. K. expressed the following opinion of the stockade situation:

"I hear that Kai is going to be released. But if they let Kai go they must let the rest go. If they did that it would create a much more happy atmosphere."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., May 23, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., May 21, p. 6.

Criticism toward Ex-Coordinating Committee and Internal Security

In spite of the more "normal" atmosphere of the camp at this time, informants still expressed hatred toward inu, the ex-Coordinating Committee and the Internal Security. The following remarks were made by two individuals of very different convictions. The first came from an active member of a pressure group.

"The Co-ordinating Committee kept their positions altogether too long, not knowing they were not wanted. No matter how well educated they were, they didn't know what they were doing.

"I don't think one of them will ever repatriate."

"Not while I'm alive," said another person present.<sup>1</sup>

The following statement was made by a very conservative mand who never has and probably never will take part in any controversy:

"Some of the people say the Co-ordinating Committee didn't finish their work. They made a statement in the paper that they had completed their work but more than 50 persons are still in there (the stockade). Some of the issei were sent to the internment camp, which made the group mad."

This man's wife now told me what she had heard about the beatings the boys in the stockade had received. She had been told by a friend employed in the hospital and "This girl wasn't the kind to lie." She then said:

"Some people say they'd like to know where they get the scum they hire on Internal Security. Internal Security has a very bad name."<sup>2</sup>

MR. BEST'S ATTITUDE TOWARD EX-SANTA FE AND LEUPP INTERNEES

(This topic has no particular connection here and may be inserted elsewhere.)

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., May 23, p. 3.



The internees from Leupp who arrived December 6th and the internees from Santa Fe who were allowed to join their families in Tule Lake during the spring of 1944 frequently criticized the reception they received from Mr. Best. Before releasing them in the camp Mr. Best was accustomed to call the men to his office and lecture them on behaving themselves and warn them to remain out of all political activities. Many ex-internees remarked that they had come to Tule Lake with good intentions and were provoked by this preliminary interview. Mr. "U", a Stanford graduate, who during his stay in Santa Fe had been the acknowledged internment center leader, stated that he had had every intent to co-operate with Mr. Best but after he was called up and lectured like a releasee from a reform school he was disgusted. He considered Mr. Best's attitude small minded and petty. Mrs. "Q" who was acquainted with many ex-internees remarked:

"When people come here from Santa Fe or when they are released from the stockade, Mr. Best tells them, 'Now I don't want to put you in the stockade again.' That makes them mad. That hasn't helped Mr. Best in the last few weeks. It hurt him in the whole colony."<sup>1</sup>

Almost every ex-Leupp internee remarked that their five days imprisonment in the stockade after their arrival at Tule gave them a splendid opportunity to become prejudiced in favor of the Daihyo Sha Kai. "Y" discussed his feelings quite frankly:

"If Mr. Best had been a high minded man I would have co-operated with him very much. We spent ten months in Leupp.

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., p. 2.

We felt we paid our debts. But when we came here they stuck us in the stockade for five days. If he had not done that I'd felt he was a fine man. Then when they left us out, he said, 'Don't you ever stick your nose in any political matter.'

"If we hadn't gone to the stockade for five days we wouldn't have heard so much about it. But we got a pretty clear picture being in there. When we got out of the stockade we were pretty wise."<sup>1</sup>

Another young kibel who had been sent to Leupp from Tule Lake said:

"I give credit (for my prejudice) to whoever put me in the stockade. It gave me a one-sided view."<sup>2</sup>

Probably the most disillusioning experience was suffered  
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by "G":

"When I came to Tule I was put in the stockade and stayed there for approximately six months. I was rather downhearted because of the fact that I had nothing to do with the incident. I saw very little reason for being confined in the stockade with persons alleged to have something to do with the incident.

"After I was there two months I had not exactly a hearing, but the person in charge of the stockade at that time, Captain Hartman, told me my past record was so bad that I had to be kept in the stockade until the condition in camp cleared up.

"Then while I was in the stockade two persons were beaten up in the stockade.<sup>3</sup> I was nearby when it happened. I reiterated to the WRA Internal Security personnel that since I was a stranger there I had very little contact with the boys. Therefore, while I was at the place where the beating was done I couldn't tell the names of the persons who did the beating because I didn't know. This is my feeling. The authorities felt that I was withholding the facts.

"I think the general opinion of the people in the stockade was that this man was stealing goods supposed to be given to the colonists. One of them was sentenced to a period of two years in Jail.

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., May 28, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., Aug. 23, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> The men beaten had had no connection with the incident but were put in the stockade while awaiting trial for stealing rice from the mess halls to make sake. It is very probable that the "political prisoners" in the stockade resented the presence of these "common thieves."



"I had another hearing just about two months before I was released. That was by Internal Security. Their attitude was rather one of appealing to me. They didn't ask me much. They asked me about the incident. They said would I behave in camp if I was released? I said, 'Yes, I will behave.' They just asked me a few things like that."<sup>1</sup>

#### FATAL SHOOTING OF SOICHI OKAMOTO

On Thursday the 24th of May this period of comparative quiet was abruptly ended by the shooting of a Japanese by one of the military police sentries. Soichi Okamoto, employed in the construction section drove from the project to get lumber which was to be used in construction work and was shot when he returned to the project through the old main entrance. The shooting was witnessed by 15 Japanese and one member of the WRA appointed personnel. Since the records of the Coroner's Inquest and the Court Martial are not available, the most reliable account of what took place rests on the statement prepared from eye-witness accounts by a committee of eight issei segregees at the request of the Spanish Consul who, in turn, was complying with a request of the Japanese government.

On the morning of May 24, the Center was calm and undisturbed. Then, at approximately 2:20 p.m., May 24, 1944, the shooting occurred. The victim, Shoichi James Okamoto, was 30 years old, had been born in Garden Grove, California and had never been abroad. In the Center, he was a truck driver, properly licensed and assigned to the construction crew.

Okamoto was driving Truck #100-41 at the order of the construction supervisor Yamane to get lumber piled across the highway from the old main gate, which is called Gate #4. He carried all necessary identification papers and badges and was qualified as a truck driver permitted to pass into the restricted area. In his truck, a swamper named Henry Shiohama who rode next to Okamoto, included eleven boys from

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<sup>1</sup>R. Hankey, Notes, June 16, pp. 1-2.



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Okamoto was driving Truck #100-41 at the order of the construction supervisor Yamane to get lumber piled across the highway from the old main gate, which is called Gate #4. He carried all necessary identification papers and badges and was qualified as a truck driver permitted to pass into the restricted area. In his truck, a swamper named Henry Shiohama who rode next to Okamoto of 1819-F accompanied Okamoto on this assignment; he likewise was provided with all necessary identification to go outside the perimeter gate. The witnesses, besides Shiohama who rode next to Okamoto, included eleven boys from

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<sup>1</sup>R. Hankey, Notes, June 16, pp. 1-2.



the heavy equipment crew who were waiting for an Army escort to go out to the cinder pit. This crew had three trucks parked in a semi-circular form, close the Gate #4 (see Diagram). Okamoto and Shiohama, on Truck #100-41, were permitted to pass out the gate and the fatal shooting occurred when they were returning via the same gate.

According to Shiohama, the new sentry had just come on duty. Word has it that the new sentry was in a disagreeable mood and was known as one of the tougher sentries. The two on the truck went over the line a bit. The sentry, on Okamoto's side of the truck, could see Shiohama's badge, but could not at first see Okamoto's because of the high sidedoor of the truck, and because of the sentry's short stature. It is claimed that the badge was on Okamoto's jacket, as was necessary. The sentry asked to see the badge in a disagreeable fashion. Okamoto showed the pass, was allowed through, and returned with his truck and swamper in a few minutes. On the way back, his truck drove up close to the heavy equipment crew's trucks. There were 11 boys on the equipment crew, the trucks in a semi-circle form, standing near the gate with fellows on the running boards, fenders, and around the vehicles. It is said that the sentry made remarks to them. The most usual phrase which was repeated in the center was, "What the hell are you Japs doing--waiting to climb the hill?" At this juncture, Okamoto was driving in towards the gate and the sentry's attention was focused back upon him. While he had been waved through the gate a few minutes before, he was now ceremoniously halted. It is claimed Okamoto said words to the effect of, "Well, here's the pass." Perhaps this sounded cocky to the already irritated guard. The sentry ordered him off the truck and commanded Shiohama to drive. Without a driver's license the latter explained, he could not drive a truck. The sentry, it is said, was infuriated at this delay. From then on, commands were well peppered with curses. This took time and raised tension all around. To Shiohama's answer the guard is said to have replied, "You Japs and your WRA friends are trying to run the whole camp." He then turned back to Okamoto, who, it is said, if he had contemplated any attack on the guard would have had plenty of time during the exchange with Shiohama, (here versions dwell on the fact that Shiohama was a swamper and could not, therefore, drive the truck, along with explanations that Okamoto would never have been fool enough to attack an armed sentry, and was not further, that sort of a person). Heavy equipment boys, not many feet away, were talking among themselves of the sentry's aggressive and insulting manner, and some despite the tension--were saying, "They're not all like that", "This one has it in for 'Japs', etc." Okamoto was apparently apprehensive by this time. When ordered out of the truck he had done so reluctantly and had left the truck door opened. At this juncture a Ford V-8, driven by Roy S. Campbell, a Caucasian WRA staff, arrived from the highway and stopped with engine running, about 7 feet from the end of Okamoto's truck.



According to Shiohama and other witness, the sentry at that time cocked his gun and went around via front to the other side of the truck where Okamoto was standing. The sentry then ordered Okamoto to the back of the truck. This would have been just outside the gate. Okamoto started but hesitated for an instant. At this point, speculate on the guards motives, with true concentration-camp psychology, the suspicion is that the guard wished to shoot him outside the gate. (Shot while trying to escape). Okamoto's hesitation is explained by this point. In the moment of hesitation, in which most say no pipes were lit and no words said, the sentry struck Okamoto sideways on the right shoulder with a rifle-butt. Okamoto raised his right arm and moved his body slightly back to ward off any further blows. While in this defensive position, the guard stepped back one pace and from a distance of four or five feet fired ~~back~~ without warning. In all accounts stemming from eye-witness testimony, the act was looked upon as an unprovoked attack, Okamoto fell with what seemed to have been a close-range stomach wound. Residents speculated on the possibility of the sentry having been overseas, having been shell-shocked, or being mentally below par. It is said, in the center, that Shiohama certainly must have been cool-headed about the affair since he summoned an ambulance in less than one minute. At any rate, the account which he and his co-workers gave as signed testimony to the Police Department in interviews with all eye-witnesses on the scene shortly thereafter is said to be factual and logical. The story of all eye-witnesses, despite already distorted newspaper versions, such as in the S. F. Examiner that the one Caucasian, Roy Campbell, eye-witness account, probably fits the picture drawn for them.

The heavy equipment crew was thunderstruck. The sentry cursed, seemed nervous, and it is said, swung the rifle in their general direction. More cursing - "You people get the hell out of here" - and they fled, Shiohama trying to get the hospital on the phone. Another crew of five stumbling on the scene were ordered back by the sentry. The ambulance arrived. The Police Department interviewed the evacuee eye-witnesses and the member of the WRA staff who had driven up behind Truck #100-41 and who had seen most of the altercation from his car.

The sentry, named Goe, reputed by gossip to be a Chinese, a Hindu or an American Indian, was placed under arrest and an Investigation Board was appointed by Lt. Col. Austin.

Okamoto was hospitalized as soon as possible. According to some eye-witnesses, the sentry would not allow any of the Japanese present to take the truck to call a doctor and a

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<sup>1</sup>Report of the Investigation Committee on the Shoichi Okamoto Incident, July 3, 1944, pp. 2-4.



Japanese ~~press~~ ran to call an ambulance on foot. The Committee's account continues:

"How long a time elapsed before he was hospitalized is not known; some say 20 minutes. According to the attending physician and surgeon, every possible means of treatment was administered."<sup>1</sup>

An operation was performed by Dr. Hashiba, assisted by the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Sleath. Two blood transfusions were administered. Okamoto died the next day May 25, at 12:10 am. The results of the autopsy performed were described by the doctors at the inquest:

"In the right chest area was this hole which was about one centimeter in diameter and this was a flesh wound that connected to the man's insides. There were some large rents that had been torn through the man's liver and his stomach had been shattered so that when it was first seen at the operation, it was not possible to recognize the pieces as a stomach. The portion of his liver on the left-hand side of the body as I stated before had had his internal contents pushed out through the cavity so it was sticking out and draped on the outside of his body, and this particular material was covered with sticky contents, a portion of which we recognized as spaghetti."<sup>2</sup>

#### IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF THE SHOOTING ON THE COLONISTS

The immediate reaction of the colonists was shock. This was closely followed by an understandable reluctance to pass through the sentry guarded gates on the part of those whose work required that they do so. Many evacuees did not come to work on Friday morning and Okamoto's fellow workers, the construction crew, held a meeting and decided not to come at all. Many meetings were held in the colony. Hostility toward the soldiers who, in the days immediately after the shooting continued to come into the colony and trade at the Co-op stores

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p. 5.

grew rapidly. The sight of a soldier's uniform was an offense to the over-wrought people.

#### ACTIVITY OF THE ADMINISTRATION

The night of May 24, no women teachers were allowed to enter the colony to hold their high school classes.<sup>1</sup> This prohibition, however, was withdrawn the next day. Mr. Best, extremely frightened, followed the excellent advice given him by the members of his staff. The primary objective of the Administration appears to have been an effort to keep the blame for the tragedy from falling on the WRA. An immediate announcement was prepared to be read in the mess halls at the noon meal on Friday, May 25. Dr. Opler asked the writer's opinion as to whether this announcement might not tie the shooting too closely to WRA.<sup>2</sup>

The announcement issued in the name of Mr. Best follows:

"I regret very much that one of the center residents was shot yesterday afternoon by a military police sentry and that he died at the center hospital early this morning. Everything was done by the medical staff at the hospital to save his life and a great many people stood ready to give their blood. An investigation is being made by the military and proper disciplinary action will follow. The WRA was in no way responsible for the shooting, and I want you all to know that we regret that it happened. No further statement can be made at this time pending investigation by the Board, but as soon as the facts are available they will be given to the residents in full detail."<sup>3</sup>

The same afternoon Mr. Best, Mr. Black, and Mr. Robertson called on the bereaved family. Okamoto was survived by his widowed mother, an older brother and two younger brothers and two sisters. On the appearance of the Caucasians, the entire

<sup>1</sup>R. Hankey, Notes, May 24, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 25, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Report of the Investigation Committee on the Shoichi Okamoto incident, July 3, 1944, p. 8.



family is said to have broken down completely.<sup>1</sup> Several other members of the WRA personnel, in particular teachers who had Okamoto's younger brothers or sisters in their classes also called on the family. One Caucasian who had just lost his own son called, taking a picture of his dead son with him. Okamoto's mother kissed the picture and dragged out her Shoichi's clothes to show the visitor.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Best also placed two automobiles at the disposal of the family and a special car was sent to Heart Mountain to bring relatives to the funeral. Employment compensation papers were immediately filed.

The colonists' fear of passing the sentries at the gate was also promptly dealt with by stationing both Caucasian and Japanese members of the WRA police department at the gates. Three days after the shooting the attitude of the sentries had changed remarkably. They no longer shouted and bullied evacuees passing through the gates because of misplaced badges, nor were their rifles in evidence. On the afternoon of May 27, they remained within the sentry box. This policy had an immediate calming effect. After they were assured adequate protection, the members of the construction crew met and on the afternoon of May 25 and decided to return to work.

#### IMMEDIATE ATTITUDES OF INFORMANTS

The reactions of informants seen immediately after the news of Okamoto's death was announced varied from controlled but deeply felt anger to almost hysterical rage. Some people

<sup>1</sup>R. Hankey, Notes, May 25, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., May 27, p. 6.



advised their friends and neighbors to keep cool until the true facts were announced. After all, said they, Okamoto might have been at fault. A statement released by Secretary Ickes on the morning of May 25 (?) which absolved Okamoto from blame, created some satisfaction but was also regarded as proof that the soldier would be considered guilty.

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 Insert statement here if it can be procured.  
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K. an older nisei and World War veteran was so moved that when discussing the occurrence with the writer he almost broke down. On May 25, after the announcement had been made in the mess halls he said:

"I heard quite a lot of criticism about it, but one thing surprises me: the people are very calm. There is quite a lot of resentment, but they are not excited. The people are saying, 'Let's be cool and know more about it before we take any action. We must not make any rash judgment until we know the facts completely.' The colony itself is taking it calmly.

"You might find hot heads may start to agitate. But we must be fair. Mr. Best is not responsible.

"We had an announcement here at noon in English and Japanese. As I say, they were very calm. The Japanese could take it. They'll take it more than any other race.

"From the information that has been gathered, of course, I don't know it looks as if the soldier used too rash judgment in using his gun."<sup>1</sup>

A young nisei girl contacted at the same time also said that the people were pretty calm but that they were talking a great deal and had had a meeting that morning. "They do not as yet know who was right, but think the soldier was too quick with his gun."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., May 25, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pp. 2-3.



"I"'s wife, a nisei said:

"The people are angry about it. But we heard over the radio that Secretary Ickes said that it was the soldier's fault, that he (the soldier) was going to hit him (Okamoto) on the head. That made the people feel better.

"They were all angry around here but nobody knew what it was all about. Some were saying, 'Well, maybe he got fresh.' But now even Secretary Ickes blames the M. P."<sup>1</sup>

Another young nisei girl, a friend of the writer, was almost in tears. She felt that the announcement made at the mess hall sounded as if WRA were trying to avoid responsibility.

"It was Mr. Best's fault for bringing in the Military in the first place. They're meeting in there (Civic Organization's Office) now."

She also stated that she was convinced that even if the soldier were convicted he would be freed soon after. She had heard that the soldier who did the shooting at Topaz was seen stationed at Gila the next year. "Don't you think the WRA ought to give the man's family some compensation," she added.

A young man told Mr. Robertson that the colony was going to demand that Mr. Best resign. "How can they do that?" asked Robertson, "Mr. Best had nothing to do with this." "Well," replied the young man, "If it weren't for Mr. Best, the military wouldn't be in control and this wouldn't have happened."<sup>2</sup>

Late in the afternoon of May 25 Mr. Best called a brief staff meeting. He stated that the incident was very regrettable and that the staff was apt to be confronted with a situation similar to that of November 4 when the newspapers had presented distorted reports which took a long time to repress. "This

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p. 2.



might be the spark which would start another incident." He reassured the staff that the absence of evacuees from their jobs during the day had not been a strike; the people were waiting to be reassured that there was no danger in their coming through the gates. Tomorrow members of the police force, both Caucasian and Japanese were to be stationed at gate 3. Patrol cars were to move among the workers on the farms and a patrol car was assigned to follow the garbage detail. He asked for the co-operation of the staff and assured them that they would be adequately protected.

He announced also that a Board of Inquiry had been appointed by the military and that WRA headquarters had requested that WRA be represented on this board by a member of its personnel. Mr. Black was to fill this position. He closed with the statement that it would be the policy of the Administration to release all information to the colony as soon as it was released by the Military.

Mr. Markley, the reports officer, then read a statement which warned the staff not to discuss the shooting, to refrain from personal comment and to keep in mind that it "was the right of 'these people' to express themselves as long as the expression did not result in violence."<sup>1</sup>

On leaving the meeting the following remark was overheard, coming from one of the male staff members, "Proper disciplinary action will be taken, Huh! They're convicting the boy before

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., pp. 5-6.



he's heard."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Best was also criticized by some staff members "for telling them nothing."

As for the meeting of the Board of Inquiry which took place the evening of May 25, no information was ever released.

The evening of May 25 Dr. Opler expressed himself as very pleased with the manner in which Best had so far handled the difficult situation. Opler also stated that it was he who had advised Best to give the Okamotos the two automobiles for their use and to place WRA members of Internal Security at the gate.

"I'm just amazed at what Best is doing. After Ickes' statement was reported to him, he said he was darn glad that it had been made. Yesterday Col. Austin was shouting over the phone and acting the sunny face. Today he was serious after he had heard Ickes' speech.

"Best has really done himself proud. The Colonel gave in on the WRA protection (at gates) question. . .The possible International complications are bothering Best. . .

"The pattern of reaction as I see it is: (1) Revenge; (2) The wish for protection and assistance."<sup>2</sup>

~~On leaving the meeting the following~~

The Coroner's Inquest also took place the evening of May 25. When the decision of the jury that the sentry had shot Okamoto "while in line of duty" was released in the newspapers the next day, it caused a great deal of resentment. Many persons at first considered it the final verdict, confusing it with the Court Martial. A copy of the Coroner's Inquest's decision, taken from the report made to the Spanish Consul, follows:

#### MODOC COUNTY CORONER'S INQUEST

On May 25, 1944, from 7:30 p.m., Modoc County Coroner's Inquest was held at the Base Hospital Operating Room.

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> ibid.



The jurors present were:

Charles Callednine

Phil J. Fish

John O'Shea

Mrs. R. C. Cox

Mrs. Anne Jamison

R. R. Baker

Daniel M. Crawford

District Attorney of Modoc County, California, Charles Lederer, conducted the hearing at the request of the Coroner. District Attorney by request of the Jurors opened the hearing with the purpose of investigating the cause of death and the persons responsible, if anyone concerned, questioned the witnesses.

#### Witnesses and Doctors

Henry Shiohama

Charlie Antoku

Gen Hitomi

Tom Kadowaki

Roy S. Campbell

Tsugio Soga

Giro Snow (Shinomoto)

Frank Amemiya

Ben Watanabe

Joe J. Nishizaki

George Yamashita

Kampo Ogawa

Kazuto Matsumoto

Sadao Yamane

Masao Tokuyoshi

Masaki Nakamoto

Dr. Jack Sleath

Dr. George Hashiba

The copy of the Coroner's Inquest record is hereto appended.

Charles Lederer made the following statement: For the purpose of record, I would like to state that as District Attorney of Modoc County, State of California, I have asked the name of the guard at the gate who actually shot the decedent, but due to Army Regulations I cannot produce it.

#### Verdict of Jurors

After some deliberation the Jury returned the following verdict:

"In the matter of inquest upon the body of Shicho (Shoichi) Okamoto, before John C. Sharp, Coroner, we, the undersigned jury summoned to appear before John C. Sharp, Coroner of the County of Modoc, in the State of California at Newell, California, on the 25th day of May, 1944, to inquire into the death of Shicho (Shoichi) Okamoto, have been sworn and charged according to the law and have made such inquisition as regards the decedent, and have adduced upon our authority, and for all to see, that we find that the decedent was named Shicho (Shoichi) Okamoto, and that he came to his death on the 25th day of May, 1944, at Newell, California, by a member of the United States Armed Forces while in the line of duty.

Signed this 26th day of May, 1944.



W. Loudon, Foreman  
Charles Callendine  
R. R. Baker

Phil J. Fish  
John O'Shea  
Daniel M. Crawford

Mrs. E. C. Cox  
Mrs. Anne Jamison

On May 26 the Newell Star released an account of the shooting, a statement by Mr. Best and a statement by Okamoto's elder brother:

#### OKAMOTO DIES FROM GUNSHOT WOUND INFLICTED BY SENTRY

##### Returning Worker Shot at Main Gate

Shoichi James Okamoto, 30, of 3002-A died at the base hospital early this morning as a result of a gunshot wound. He had been shot by a military police sentry at the old main entrance to the project.

Lieutenant Colonel Verne Austin ordered the sentry placed under arrest and appointed a Board of Investigation. These steps were taken by the military who are solely responsible for the investigation of the facts in the case.

The victim of the shooting was employed in the construction section and had been driving a truck. He drove out through this gate to get lumber which was to be delivered to the construction job, and was returning to the center at the time. On the truck with him was one worker, a witness to the shooting, and others were near who have cooperated with the police in giving full statements of the circumstances.

##### BEST'S STATEMENT

Mr. Best made a statement this morning which was read at all of the mess halls in the center. The statement follows:

"I regret very much that one of the center residents was shot yesterday afternoon by a military police sentry and that he died at the center hospital early this morning. Everything was done by the medical staff at the hospital to save his life and a great many people stood ready to give their blood.

Investigation is being conducted by the military and proper disciplinary action will follow. The WRA was in no way responsible for the shooting, and I want you all to know that we regret that it happened. No further statement can be made at this time pending the investigation by the board, but as soon as facts are available they will be given to the residents in full detail."

At the same time Mr. Best expressed sympathy to the bereaved members of the family and offered to make available to them any facilities of the WRA.



The shooting happened at approximately 2:20 p.m. on Wednesday, according to the official reports at the Internal Security office. As soon as the first report was received an ambulance was ordered to the scene and Mr. Okamoto removed to the center hospital. Every effort was made to save his life, and no one was permitted to question him about the circumstances because of the danger of sapping his strength.

Two blood transfusions were necessary before the operation could be performed. The operation was done by Dr. G. Hashiba, who was assisted by Dr. Jack Sleath, chief medical officer of the WRA. Captain Edwards of the military medical staff was also present as were two other evacuee doctors at the hospital.

BROTHER ASKS UNBIASED INVESTIGATION, JUSTICE: NO UNDUE DISTURBANCE IN CENTER

The victim of the shooting is survived by his grief-stricken mother, Sekiyō, an older brother, Koichi, and two younger brothers and two sisters who were at his bedside at the time of death shortly after midnight at 12:10 a.m. Another brother and sister are still in the Heart Mountain center and a sister is in the Gila center.

The older brother stated that he wanted a complete and unbiased investigation of the circumstances surrounding the shooting and full justice meted, although he hoped that there would be no undue disturbance within the center over the affair.

#### EVACUEE ATTITUDES EXPRESSED MAY 27 and 28.

Compiling attitudes during this period was a difficult and delicate task. Five contacts were attempted. One man, K., found the subject too painful to discuss. However, at three homes, family members and friends were present and it was possible to note a considerable number of opinions and reactions.

"Y" a kibel was contacted in the presence of his kibel wife and a kibel male friend. "Y" stressed that WRA'S 'attempt to avoid responsibility' was having a very bad effect on the people. "They think if WRA's not responsible that's bad. Who is responsible?" He stated that he had a good deal of business to transact in the Administrative Quarters but he was not going to risk going through the gates. His wife remarked that the



sight of soldiers patrolling the camp with machine guns was offensive. Neither "Y" nor his wife anticipated that the people would make any demonstration. "What can we do?" said "Y"., bitterly, "We're only Japs. All we can do is take it." "Y" added that he had heard that only a few days ago an issei had been hit on the head by a soldier when going out of gate 3. He had not understood English and had not obeyed some order made by the soldier.<sup>1</sup>

At a large family group visited on May 28, the shooting was discussed at length. Everyone present agreed that the soldiers should stay out of camp. Everytime the people see them they feel worse. Trouble might occur, the men agreed, but "everything would depend on the verdict." "If the soldier was acquitted," said a young kibel, "the best thing WRA could do to avoid trouble would be to tear down the fence. Then trouble might not start. It would be all right to have the military at the main gate, but at the other gates - No." Those present were indignant about some of the accounts which had appeared in the newspapers. "Some papers said that Okamoto had tried ju-jitsu on the soldier." One young man present asked the writer if she thought it possible that the soldier might be given a heavy sentence and then sent some place else and released. When told that this was a difficult question to answer he asked another, "If the soldier were given a heavy sentence and sent away to serve a light one, would the soldiers here at Tule Lake know about that or would they think he had received the heavy sentence?"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., May 28, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p. 4.



"I", a nisei friend of long standing had no hesitation about speaking of the shooting or of its effect upon the people. His reaction to the nervous strain was quite American. He made several cynical humorous remarks at which all present laughed immoderately.

"Best has called a center-wide holiday on the day of the funeral. (A half-holiday was actually called.) They are also going to have a wake at the high-school. That's a darn good idea. It would be more or less ironical to give the fellow a military burial - being as he's a repatriat and a No-No.

"A lot of how this goes is going to depend on how WRA handles it between now and the time the verdict is released. If WRA can prove to the people that they are sincere in their belief that the man who was shot was of no fault, and that they did their best to get justice, then things might quiet down. But if they exonerate the man completely, there's going to be a blow-off. They'll have to build a double fence around the Administration section.

"The smartest thing WRA could do is to start impressing the people now that the Military is more concerned than WRA. After all, the man was a soldier. Under these conditions it comes under the jurisdiction of the War Department.

"When the announcement was made in our mess everybody took it as a matter of course. Knowing the Military of Japan, they know how it was. The local and civilian authorities have to step into the background.

"The smartest thing to do would be to give the man twenty years and send him to jail. Send him to jail anyway and pardon him after three or four years.

"After all, he (Okamoto) was unarmed. If I were the sentry and had two rifles and automatic pistols I wouldn't shoot him. I'd bat him on the head with the rifle.

On Mr. Best's visit to the Okamoto family and his decision to grant permission for a public funeral, "I" said:

He's learned a lot. He had to. He's more sensible with the people now. The Japanese people are appreciative of that, especially when it's an order given by the Project Director. It will mean more than any 500 or 600 words he can say.

"On the other hand, there are people who talk like this: 'Well, we can't expect justice from the Army here inasmuch as we are disloyal Japs and their enemies. If that's the case



and the man is exonerated, all we can do is learn his name and remember it until after the war and see which side wins.' They want to bring it up at the peace conference.

"Another faction says: 'You won't hear anymore about this until after the war.' By that time they hope the people will have forgotten about it. Personally, I think if they drag it out and hope people will forget, I think there will be a lot less ruckus if they just come right out with it, even if he is exonerated.

"You look at it this way. This is what affects people now. If that can happen and the man is exonerated, that will give the M. P.'s the impression that the lives of the Japs in here are not worth a hell of a lot. That's just asking for more shooting. Heck, I might walk through that gate next morning and the guy will take a shot at me. I'm dead. That's not going to help me any.

"I feel this way. He's gone. I can't bring him back to life.

"I heard that Austin had sent a special car to Heart Mountain to bring his relatives in for the funeral. That's the least they could do.

"It all depends on what the verdict is.

"The newspaper stories try to give the impression that the man misinterpreted the sentry's orders.

"There's one thing they're going to have to look out for. What will Japan do about this? They're liable to figure that ten Americans are worth one Jap. Pretty soon each side will be seeing who can kill them (prisoners or internees) off faster."

As I left "I"'s home he remarked that the lid might blow off the camp in two hours. If that happened the safest place for Mr. Robertson, Mr. Hayward and myself, the only Caucasians who "I" thought worth worrying about, would be inside the colony, at a Japanese friend's home.<sup>1</sup>

Another nisei, "M", about 28 years old, was far more excited than "I". "M" was at this time employed on Dr. Opler's staff and had been busily gathering eye-witness accounts of the shooting. From these accounts he had prepared a report which

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., May 27, pp. 3-6.



he entitled, "Murder at Tule Lake." He also stressed the peoples' "hostility to the uniform." "Everytime they see a soldier driving through camp in their armored cars it makes their blood boil." He was convinced that if the soldier were not punished promptly and justly, the results "would be terrible." According to data "M" had gathered, the sentry, Goe, had been rude to evacuees passing through the gate for some time. The Japanese had commented on the difference between his attitude and that of the sentry who preceded him and had come to the conclusion that Goe "had it in for the Japs." On one occasion (it was said) he had shouted at an issei because the man had his badge on the wrong side of his jacket. The issei, not understanding, had attempted to pass, whereupon Goe had hit him on the back of the head with the butt of his pistol. "M" had prepared an account of the shooting from eye-witness reports which he allowed the writer to read. The gist of it is presented here from memory. The chief significance of this account is that it is probably the version which was spread through camp and believed by the majority of the colonists. It will be noted that it agrees substantially with the statement given to the Spanish Consul by the Investigating Committee.

"When Okamoto approached the gate, driving the truck, the sentry waved at him. Okamoto interpreted this as a signal to stop. The soldier then approached him, cursed at him and ordered him to get out of the truck. Okamoto got out of the truck reluctantly. The soldier then ordered him to walk outside the fence. Okamoto did so hesitantly and the soldier made as if to strike him with the butt of his rifle. Okamoto raised his arms and the soldier shot him in the stomach at the range of three feet. Okamoto screamed and fell to the ground writhing and clutching his stomach. The soldier reloaded his rifle and lighted a cigarette. The other Japanese present looked on amazed. Then the soldier said, "Get the hell out of here or I'll shoot you too." The men ran to the hospital to get the



ambulance. While they were gone another truck (a lumber truck) drew up to the gate. Seeing that the man on the ground was a Japanese one of the men in this truck attempted to get out. The soldier shouted at him, "Get back! Get the hell out of here."<sup>1</sup>

#### Comment

From the above statements it may be implied that a considerable proportion of the colonists were of the opinion that serious trouble might arise almost instantly, particularly if the soldier were exonerated. "It all depends on the verdict," was a general conclusion. Some criticized the WRA's obvious attempt to evade all responsibility, while "I", always practical, praised this administrative move as good policy. In spite of the fact that personnel from the Internal Security had been stationed at the gates, several informants stated that they were going to keep away from gates, since, as they expressed it, "If WRA is not responsible for us, what's to keep the sentrys from shooting us down too?" An understandable hostility to the soldiers, aggravated by their continued appearance inside the fence, was expressed by most people. Moreover, the suspicion that the sentry would be given a sentence which he would not be forced to serve, appeared to be fairly common. If "I"'s account of attitudes is reliable, as the writer believes it to be, some of the colonists were already predicting two days after Okamoto's death and that the soldier would be acquitted that the Army would not release this information until such a time as feeling had died down in camp. Consequently, the only recourse of the colonists would be to wait until after the war to obtain justice.

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., pp. 1-2.



ATTITUDES OF THE CAUCASIAN PERSONNEL

Many of the members of the appointed personnel were almost as angry and disturbed than the Japanese. The details of the shooting, particularly the fact that Okamoto had been shot down at a range of three feet were repeated with exclamations of horror and disgust. From Mr. Best down, the majority of the staff members appeared to be deeply moved and sincerely regretful. Only a few remarked that Okamoto may have been impudent to the sentry. Many of the teachers who had to pass through the gate on their way to school expressed a hostility to the soldiers very similar to that of the evacuees. The only genuinely inconsiderate remark overheard was made by a not too well balanced staff member employed in the hospital. She stated:

"When Okamoto was brought in the Japanese standing around were just praying for him to die and don't kid yourself." When another person present expressed sympathy for the soldiers, the same informant said: "Don't give them any sympathy. They had all made up their minds that if this fellow is found guilty, they'd all start shooting up a few Japs. Then they (the military authorities) couldn't do anything to the whole company."<sup>1</sup>

When a week passed with no sign of uprising from the colony the majority of the staff relaxed considerably and after the funeral little tension was apparent.

Mr. Best was reported to be in a very anxious if not terrified state of mind. A week after the shooting the writer was told by well-informed friends that Mr. Best had come to

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., June 1, p. 2.



the decision that her presence on the project could be detrimental to the Administration and that it would be best for her to leave. The writer immediately contacted Mr. Best, and was advised by him "to stay out of the colony for a while until things blow over." Either because this advice was followed, or, more probably, because no disturbing incident occurred, the matter was dropped and the writer was not expelled. It is possible that a contributory factor to this state of apprehension which gripped the responsible members of the Administration was the suspicion or the knowledge that the Army intended to white-wash the affair. On May 27, Mr. Robertson asked the writer, "What do you think would happen if the Army white-washed the whole thing and did not release the verdict for months? The same evening Dr. Opler remarked that "WRA office was trying like hell to keep the Army from whitewashing the shooting."<sup>1</sup>

#### DIVISIONAL RESPONSIBLE MEN ATTEMPT TO FORM WORKERS' ORGANIZATION

A few days after the shooting a very interesting attempt to reenter the political scene was made by the supposedly disbanded Divisional Responsible Men. This group had led in breaking the status quo in December and January. Ex-Co-ordinating Committee members took the leading part in this activity, in fact, K. Okamoto, an ex-member, was chairman of the meeting. The group conceived the idea of forming a workers' organization "for the protection and security of the workers." The proposed body was purported to be entirely unpolitical in character.

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., May 27, pp. 2-3, 6.



The divisional workers themselves were not consulted. Plans were made and a committee appointed to interview Mr. Best by the Divisional Responsible men only. The minutes of the first meeting, which was held May 26, follow:

A special meeting of the Divisional Responsible Men of the Tule Lake Center was held on May 26, 1944, at 1608, from 1:32 p.m. K. Okamoto, ex-Co-ordinating Committee and Supervisor of the Construction Division presided.

The Chairman addressed the body and stated that the special meeting was called for the purpose of discussing future preventive or precautionary measures to avoid the recurrence of an incident similar or diverse in nature to the one in which James Okamoto was a victim, as well as take steps in assisting in any way possible with the disposition of the case.

The Chairman called on Mr. Henry Shiohama, an eye-witness of the incident, who then read his statement of the detailed account of the incident as he saw it. Many questions were asked of and thereupon answered by him. Some were as follows:

1. Was the guard disagreeable? (Ans.) Yes.
2. How long was the guard stationed there? (Ans.) I don't know, only that, in the morning, a different guard was stationed there.
3. When the sentry gave the signal, was the truck outside of the fence? (Ans.) Yes. However the actual shooting took place inside of the gate.
4. When the sentry made the statement, "Don't get fresh. You and your WRA friends are trying to run the whole camp," were you in the truck? (Ans.) Yes. This sentry made the statement and came around to Okamoto's side.
5. Was the sentry an American or a Mexican? (Ans.) He had a dark complexion, was short, and not too tall. I couldn't tell.
6. Was Campbell of the Construction who came in a V-8 close enough to your truck to hear the conversation? (Ans.) He was right in back of our truck. So the distance was near enough to hear the conversation.
7. Did the Heavy Equipment boys hear the conversation? (Ans.) I believe so. Some of the boys were standing on the bumper.

Mr. Kondo then reported that he, on behalf of the Construction, and Mr. Nishimoto of the Motor Pool had consulted the Project Director requesting a guaranty of safety to all those passing the Gates hereafter to which Mr. Best replied that a 'guaranty' may not be possible, however, utmost effort will be exerted toward the insurance of safety. Hereafter workers going out to the farm and Garbage crew going out of the Gate may notify the Internal Security for extra protection. Mr. Kondo



also mentioned that he had suggested the institution of the Colonial Police force at the gate to which it was informed that Mr. Schmidt is studying the matter of placing the force about 20 or 30 feet from the Gate to prevent future disruptions. However, Mr. Dondo regretted, since the scope of negotiation is limited within the bounds of the Construction and Motor Pool Divisions only, weight of negotiation is not as strong as may otherwise be if a body of representatives from all divisions supported.

B. Akitsuki then mentioned how much the Administrative Personnel's visit to the bereaved family had contributed toward the feelings of the colonists.

Upon question of the Chairman as to whether any divisions had undergone a work stoppage because of the incident, no case of substantial importance was reported. Having maintenance of peace in the Center as our object, even all allusion of such an action should be given discouragement.

Mr. Yamatani then brought up by way of reference how he had advised and forewarned Lt. Collins the very morning of the incident to change the abusive and disagreeable attitude of the M.P.'s toward those passing the Gate, otherwise, such matters, however little and small in nature, may be a spark from which another incident may transpire. In view of the present incident and in view of the lack of a central representative body, Mr. Yamatani pointed out the pressing need for a workers' organization for the protection and security of the workers. B. Akitsuki then questioned whether the organization of such a group would affect the establishment of and conflict with the functions of the contemplated Representative Committee. To this question, some opinioned that the body would strictly be a workers' organization, dealing only with matters effecting the welfare and interests of the workers, it should virtually not affect or conflict with the Committee. Mr. Kawamura thought that the body should merely be a temporary one, elastic in its structure, and subject to dissolution at any time when its existence, directly or indirectly, impedes the bringing about of the organization of the Committee. Mr. Shimada suggested that the body should be in existence until the formation of the Committee. Some even opinioned that the organization of this body should be withheld until the respective responsible men have first consulted the divisional workers. However, the general consensus of opinion was that even a temporary group to deal with the immediately pending problems, such as insurance of safety when passing through the Gates, be formed. Then, future plans for a workers' group may be discussed and decided upon later, subsequent to the Administration's approval or rejection.

Thereupon the following persons were selected on a temporary committee:



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|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. George Yamatani  | 6. Hideo Sakuma    | 11. Joe Nakao     |
| 2. Aizo Takahashi   | 7. Shiro Kawamura  | 12. Ted Nishimoto |
| 3. Kumaharu Okamoto | 8. Chodo Okutake   | 13. Sadae Yamane  |
| 4. Richard Kondo    | 9. Iwao Namekawa   | 14. Harry Ikemoto |
| 5. Masao Shimada    | 10. Sage Muraoka   | 15. S. Saito      |
|                     | 16. Byron Akitsuki |                   |

in order to present the following recommendations:

1. Insurance of security when passing through all Gates.
2. Elimination of either the pass or the badge, and the institution of either one.
3. Selection of agreeable M.P.'s as attendants at the Gates.

Block 30 Manager Kawaoka was introduced to the group. He reported in details the progress made in the preparations for the approved center-wide funeral for James Okamoto by the Ward Chairmen of Block Managers. Ward Chairmen have taken the initiative to make preparations and arrangements for the funeral. From the Ward Chairmen and Block Managers, a Funeral Committee will be formed, it was informed. Upon the body's approval (Divisional Responsible Men), Mr. Kawaoka then requested for representations from the divisions to serve on this Funeral Committee. The body present decided that the Construction and Motor Pool divisions should select several persons to serve on this Committee. Other divisions will assist in any possible way, even though representation is not made. Mr. Kawaoka then announced that the wake service will be held in the High School Auditorium and the funeral at the outdoor stage.

When the committee appointed at this meeting interviewed Mr. Best he chose to regard their project as political in nature and refused them permission to form such a body if they expected it to be recognized by the Administration. Toward informal workers' representative bodies he had no objection. From the minutes of this interview it is apparent that Mr. Best had finally realized the unpopularity of the members of the Coordinating Committee and the Divisional Responsible Men, stating that their attempt to form even a temporary body might divide the colony again. Considering the temper of the people at this time, his refusal to grant recognition was wise. The minutes state that "as a whole, the recommendations (of the Divisional Responsible Men) were accepted and put into practice,



such as the stationing of the Colonial Police at the entrance of the Gate." This suggestion, it should be noted, did not originate with the Divisional Responsible Men, but was put into practice the day after the shooting on the recommendation of the Construction Crew Workers with the support of several members of the Administration.

INFORMAL MEETING OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
DIVISIONAL RESPONSIBLE MEN AND THE PROJECT DIRECTOR  
of the  
Tule Lake Center

Time: 11:00 a.m. Date: May 30, 1944 Place: Project  
Director's Office

B. Akitsuki, on behalf of the Divisional Responsible Men, presented the recommendations of the body to the Project Director, although he had previously submitted a memorandum enumerating the various recommendations made by the group at its meeting held on May 26, 1944. As a whole, the recommendations were accepted and put into practice, such as the stationing of the Colonial Police at the entrance of the Gate. He further stated that the body felt the pressing need for an organization represented by various divisions and sections for the purpose of maintaining future protection and security of the workers, subsequent to the recent incident in which James Okamoto was a victim.

Mr. Best expressed great distress over the incident and stated that as our respect to the man who passed away, tribute must be paid purely on a religious and personal basis in which politics should be wholly uninvolved. He further mentioned that an establishment of a temporary body composed of responsible men of various divisions and sections may tend to divide the Colony again. He felt that another trouble, presumably caused by this recent incident, will not recur; that is, he hopes it will not. If it should, it will be one in which people will be against the Administration and in such an event, the people are the only ones who are going to suffer. If in the future, at any time, any incident of any nature occurs from which trouble starts, we might just as well wash our hands and have the Army take over the camp," Mr. Best commented.

The program under way to establish a Representative Committee to disseminate information and to talk and counsel with brought no response from the Colony because there were some groups which disliked the Administration and groups which disliked the Divisional Responsible Men, the Project Director



informed. As a whole, Mr. Best felt that it was inadvisable to form such a body (committee) at the present time. Mr. Black pointed out that in view of the non-acceptance of the Administration's invitation to proceed with the formation of the Representative Committee, setting up of a temporary committee, which will not be authorized by Washington, will stall off the time when we can bring about the required Representative Committee which Washington has already approved.

Upon B. Akitsuki's statement that the unification of the workers is urgent in order to prevent any trouble and to maintain order among workers, inasmuch as they are the backbone of the Colony, Mr. Best stated that there is no reason why the workers cannot organize as workers to represent their various activities and to present statements and recommendations, but as an Administration, such a body cannot be officially recognized. Recognition of such a body would tend to split and upset the Colony and the establishment of a true Representative Committee. However, if a Representative Committee selected on a geographical basis were established, various committees such as Committee on Works, Committee on School, Committee on Playground, etc., may be formed from the main Committee to surmount and cope with any difficulties which may arise in the various fields; for example, the Committee on Works might take up matters concerning the welfare and interests of the workers. In this way, partiality will be avoided and every person will have a part in this Committee.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Byron Akitsuki

Attendance: R. R. Best, Project Director  
H. L. Black, Assistant Project Director

Kumaharu Okamoto  
Richard Kondo  
Aizo Takahashi  
Byron Akitsuki

Considering the dislike and suspicion with which Yamatani, Akitsuki, Okamoto and Takahashi were regarded by most colonists at this time, it is difficult to understand how they dared risk placing themselves in any position of public prominence. It is possible, of course, that they were not conscious of the extent of their unpopularity, or if they were, that they



considered the opinions of the ordinary colonists of little consequence. This group and the prominent officers of the Co-operative Enterprises have been described by Caucasians and Japanese who know them well as feeling themselves superior to the "rest of the dumb Japs". Perhaps they looked upon their unsavory reputations as the inevitable result of their prominence. *in the colony.*

In any case, the group was injured and angry at Mr. Best's refusal. Miss I described their indignation:

"Because of this shooting they wanted to make some sort of a labor organization to protect the workers. Mr. Best said he was really distressed over the incident but politics should not be involved in the funeral; it should be a purely religious matter, purely a matter of paying tribute to the deceased.

"Mr. Shimada, Mr. Yamatani, and Mr. Akitsuki say, "No matter how hard we work and how much we try to do for the people we are always called inu. So we might as well leave the place alone and let it burn up."<sup>1</sup>

In reference to the attitude of the people she quoted a saying in Japanese which is similar to the English expression, "They bite the hand that feeds them."

#### THE OKAMOTO FUNERAL

The arrangements for Shoichi Okamoto's funeral were undertaken by the ward chairmen. A funeral committee of block managers and representatives of the Construction and Motor Pool department handled the details. The entire center contributed to the funeral expenses, a certain part of which, as is usual, were born by WRA. A wake service was held in the high school on May 30, the evening preceding the funeral and some

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 15, pp. 1, 4.



1,200 people are said to have attended.

The day of the funeral, May 31, was unpleasantly cold and a drizzling rain fell intermittently. The funeral was held on the outdoor stage. The report made to the Spanish Consul states that 6,000 persons attended, but Mr. Robertson estimated the number as nearer 4,000. The Administration wished some photographs of the occasion but was dubious as to how this might be received by the people. Mr. Hucyke was given the task because he was thought to be well known in the colony. The photographs were taken without incident. Had the Administration known how very unpopular Mr. Hucyke was in the colony they would have had good cause for concern.

Mr. Best and other high ranking members of the appointed personnel attended. Mr. Best had not wished to attend the funeral and had suggested that Mr. Black or Mr. Robertson deliver the speech which had been prepared by Mr. Spicer. However, his subordinates finally prevailed upon him to go. From Spicer's original draft Mr. Best omitted the words, "a just and wise decision will be made."<sup>1</sup> The description of the funeral and the text of Mr. Best's speech as reported in the Newell Star follows:

#### RESIDENTS PAY SOLEMN TRIBUTE AT FINAL RITES FOR OKAMOTO

##### Outdoor Funeral Attended by 9000

Nine thousand people stood bareheaded for hours in a chill wind and a drizzle of rain Wednesday afternoon to pay lasting tribute to the memory of Shoichi James Okamoto, martyred victim of a shooting which Secretary of Interior Harold L. Ickes termed "completely unwarranted and without provocation on the part of the victim."

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., June 4, p. 2.



Thousands came from all parts of the center, in spite of the cold discomfort, to stand with bowed heads in tribute to the deceased. At the same time they were expressing a protest against the hate and intolerance engendered by this war. Men and women, young and old, mothers with babies in their arms, thus offered sympathy to the bereaved family. Every person present was moved by sorrow.

Mr. Asamitsu Okutake was the chairman for the service. Mr. Iwao Namekawa gave a graphic testimonial on the history of the late Shoichi Okamoto, an account of the making a true Japanese who had had the best of life still before him. Words of condolence on behalf of the center residents was given by Mr. Kazumi Kawaoka.

In deep silence broken by the wind, the Rev. Senzo Sasaki conducted the final rites assisted by all other Buddhist reverends in the center. Incense offerings were made by various organizations, departments, and ward representatives.

#### MESSAGE

Project Director Ray R. Best extended a memorial address in behalf of the Administration. He said, "I wish to express regret that this unhappy event has occurred. I have already assured the young man's family on behalf of the Administration that all in our power will be done to assist them in their hour of grief.

"The community is to be commended for the help that it has given the bereaved family and for the public expression of sympathy. The spirit shown during the past few days gives me confidence that we have learned to live under the difficult and complex conditions that prevail in this center."

#### REACTIONS TO MR. BEST'S SPEECH AND THE FUNERAL

Undoubtedly Mr. Best's speech which he delivered with sincere and honest feeling was a gesture of extreme significance in dissipating resentment toward the WRA. The fact that the project director appeared in person, making a speech which happily fit into the colonist's concept of good taste, impressed some persons deeply. Less emotional individuals praised it as a first rate political gesture. Enemies of Mr. Best or persons who bore him a grudge of long standing were not impressed but they were not able to affect the general good effect materially. Immediately after the speech, Best received a number of letters



of appreciation, one of which, according to Dr. Opler, was "just gooey with compliments."<sup>1</sup> The dignified funeral, the presence of high ranking members of the appointed personnel and the respect shown the deceased by granting the half holiday were also appreciated.

The day after the funeral two nisei girls gave a glowing account of the funeral. "At least 5,000 people were there; Mr. Best made a speech and the flowers were wonderful. . . It went off very well." The second girl remarked, "He was lucky to have such a nice funeral," and then stopped in embarrassment. The first girl then added, "It is going to be bad though if the soldier is acquitted. The people are just waiting to hear."<sup>2</sup>

K. was deeply impressed:

"I felt happy that he came and made that talk. Not to do it would have made the people suspicious. I felt very good about it. Undoubtedly he created a better feeling by coming than by staying away.

"The Japanese people thought sure he would send Mr. Black or Mr. Robertson and that Mr. Best wouldn't come. They were surprised. He has regained some confidence. Coming in and speaking showed courage.

"I've heard that the boy (Okamoto) was a very good boy. Many times as he was going in and out of the gate he noticed the boys with him making sarcastic remarks. He expressed his opinion in this way: he told the boys not to be sarcastic. The soldiers were on duty and were performing the duty as they were told. 'If you continue to antagonize the soldiers,' he said, 'something may happen.' Then he had to get it himself.

"Sometimes I wonder if there's a God in the world.

"It's a reflection on the United States Army. The Military Police should be the model for the Army. Here they are acting, how should I say, rather rudely,"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., June 2, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., June 1, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., June 3, p. 1.



"Y", a kibeï, was not impressed by Mr. Best's gesture. He implied that many people, especially the issei, understood "why Mr. Best had made such a fine speech."

"He's good now, but think what happened last time (farm accident). He's learned. . . Now he has confidence in their behaving peacefully.

"I was glad the light (public address system) didn't go off. Last time he spoke it did go off and he felt very bad.

At the same interview Y asked if it were true that Robertson was going to be project director. He also remarked, "If there is trouble, I won't mind. I'll get a kick out of watching it."<sup>1</sup>

"I", while scorning to be moved by Mr. Best's gesture, praised its cleverness:

"I will have to give the man credit. He really has done his best. I didn't go to the funeral myself. But he attended the funeral and called the half holiday. Reading the speech, it didn't seem much different than the notice he sent to the mess halls. I thought it was a darn good idea as far as he was concerned. If that was the full text of the speech I think he's pretty smart. He said just enough, no more. He didn't lay it on too thick.

"He's more popular now than he has been since the beginning of the camp.

"Regardless of why he did it, the fact stands that he did do it. That's what you have to give the man credit for. It couldn't all have been prompted through selfishness. I don't believe a man who wrote that speech could be entirely selfish. He could have stayed at home and let one of his stooges come down."

"I" did not now believe that the shooting would now cause trouble in camp. Yet he still stressed the importance of the verdict. "All the goon squad members are resting peacefully in the stockade. If the verdict is bad, things may change." He also remarked upon the change of attitude of the sentries at the gate:

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., pp. 2, 3.



"We've got some nice boys at the gate now. There used to be some guys who'd make you step out, drive the truck through the gate and then get back in. They're pretty good now."<sup>1</sup>

"O", a conservative individual admired the speech but was not moved by it:

"He (Mr. Best) was thinking of the future of the center, particularly of the safety and security. I said to myself, 'He's quite a diplomat.' He made a very intelligent speech. If he had made the wrong kind of speech, it would have meant more trouble. He chose his words very carefully."

Speaking of this period at a later day O said:

"There was unrest, particularly among the young boys. They were quite excited. But there was nothing they could do. If they start trouble, something will happen. I know lots of people had good experience in the last incident. They don't want any more trouble. If they start trouble, the same thing will happen."<sup>2</sup>

"U" an ex-Santa Fe internee and a strong supporter of the "Q" pressure group was most cynical about the Administration's policy during the funeral:

"As you know, the shooting took place in such a manner that it was liable to cause almost any kind of trouble with grave consequence. But with the experience of the past, residents of this center kept themselves very quiet, knowing themselves how serious a matter it was. The Administration has done a very marvelous way of taking the matter very cautiously, trying to calm the feelings of the residents.

"The question of sincerity and sympathy to the family, in my opinion, on the part of the Administration is doubtful. But they have worked in a very wise way to prevent some incident which might occur. Leaving the funeral to be a camp funeral was done very excellently and that I appreciate and admire. The Administration was wise in persuading the residents to perform the public funeral. That was one of the reasons which should be considered important in calming down the feelings of the people. Mr. Best was very wise in making the funeral so big. It made people feel very good, with the expense of the residents.

"If this was a public funeral, which the Administration sincerely recognized it, it should have paid part of the funeral expense from the government or the Administration.

<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 20, pp. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., June 14, p. 1.

<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 4, pp. 4, 5.



"The committee who represented the funeral was more or less pulled in as tools of Mr. Best. If I had been a man on that responsible committee to perform the funeral I would certainly have discussed the matter with Mr. Best, so at least a certain part of the funeral would have been paid by the Administration. This time they paid exactly the same amount as for any other funeral, \$173.00.

"Enough for the coffin," interjected his wife.<sup>1</sup>

The following letter written by "O" on June 5 is an interesting, if involved expression of public sentiment. In complicated phrases, "O" expresses the confusion of the more thoughtful colonists over general WRA policy and particularly on the important point of which body, WRA or the Army, was responsible for their protection. In keeping with all other informants at this time, he remarks that "the colony is eagerly waiting with great expectation for the official announcement of the truth."

Generally speaking, the attitude and sentiment of the colony toward shooting incident is very quiet and does not make sharp and strong criticism in comparison to the last year's incident. It seems to give me a hint that on account of the past experienced troublesome period, the colonists are acting much more sensibly and observing the present existing condition with the eyes of great interest.

As far as I can observe the present existing public sentiment, I hope that probably there will be no public disturbance or see the slightest tendency of trouble and pressure group. However, it appears to me that the colonists have received considerable shock and a tendency of great anger toward thoughtless cruel barbaric in-human being attitude of the military police.

Other day we held the regular ward meeting and a Block Manager brought up the sincere hope of request by the people, concerning inhuman attitude of the military police toward the recent tragic incident that hereafter, the w.r.a. would guarantee and take proper measurement and caution for our safety and security especially employees of the center. We do not want to repeat the tragic history. If these tragics occur in any event, it will be the most disastrous thing to see and will greatly effect the public welfare and affairs in the future of the center. With understanding, the mutual cooperation and

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 14, p. 1.



for the future of the center we must prevent and take safety measures from now on to promote public welfare and the harmonious way of living.

Since November's incident, it appears to me the general policy of the center has been very much complicated and changed on the part of the administration. To the best of my knowledge, we seem to have two authorities, w.r.a. and the army. This will induce us into contradiction of our minds to understand the policy and the settlement of difficult problems with the authorities. According to the statement of the Project Director, Mr. Best stated that w.r.a. will not be responsible for the shooting. In this case, the colony naturally thinks the army will take the fullest measurement for responsibility of shooting.

We understand that segregation in this center are given the fullest protection and w.r.a. enforces the laws in order to maintain the public in order and peace according to their regulations and that the army will protect our safety and security with the fullest cooperation of w.r.a. The most significant point which always is miscomprehended and contradicts our minds is whether the army has authority or not within the barbed wire fence is the public curiosity toward the administration of w.r.a. From time to time, I hear the people saying that the army has no authority within the barbed wire fence whatever, and w.r.a. has the fullest power to control the entire center. The people feel the army is supposed not to stay in the boundary of w.r.a. This sounds very reasonable but we do not know what degree is the truth.

Tule Lake Center is known as the segregation camp and in comparison to the other nine Relocation Centers, the state of this center might entirely be different on administration policy of the w.r.a. On account of this the center might need the combined authorities over the administration. The colony sincerely hopes that either one of them must take responsibility, otherwise we will have no authority to conform and to protect our safety and security.

With the most prudent attitude and the greatest interest, the colony is observing the progress of the present affairs and those false communication and broadcasting over radio deeply degrade the public morale and extremely irritate the public sentiment and anger. As the most typical characteristic of the Orient races, especially, Japanese has a great tendency toward excitement, irritation and judge things sentimentally. In consideration of these facts I sincerely hope that the authority take thorough steps for the investigation and the justice will be done for a better solution. Also I have confidence that the colony is eagerly waiting with great expectation for the official announcement of the truth.

~~In typical kibe style the writer of the above letter has hinted at many important attitudes which have been more frankly stated by other informants.~~



### Agitation after Funeral

The Administration's policy in regard to the Okamoto shooting was flawless. Nevertheless, certain persons began agitating immediately after the funeral. Who these persons were or what their plans comprised has never been revealed by the writer's informant. It is the writer's opinion that the leader in this movement was a publicity seeker, who had not entered the camp until the spring of 1944. Whether he worked with the "Q" pressure group is not known. Had the writer not enjoyed the confidence of an extremely honest and frank informant even this meager information would not have been gathered. The Administration at this time knew nothing of this particular attempt to use the Okamoto Shooting as an incentive to trouble, although they may have suspected the leader vaguely as an "agitator." It is known that the leader made a specific threat of what would be done if the verdict was unfavorable. When the soldier was eventually exonerated by the Court Martial, more than a month after the funeral, this threat was not carried out and it's maker was reputed to have lost considerable face.

### Mr. Best's Attitude - June 4

Once the ordeal of the funeral speech was over and the complimentary and grateful letters from some evacuees were received, Mr. Best lost much of the anxiety which had haunted him since the shooting. He told the writer that he had decided to allow the Okamoto family to read the report of the Coroner's Inquest so that they might see for themselves the testimony which had resulted in the verdict that the soldier had shot



"in line of duty." Mr. Best remarked that the chief Japanese witness had become badly confused at the trial and had given conflicting and confused testimony. Mr. Best invited the family to his office to read the report and stated that he would let them study it all day if they cared to. He had been much impressed by the character and intelligence of the Okamoto family and felt that it was largely due to their attitude and the voluntary statement made by Okamoto's brother that agitation had been held to a minimum. He realized, however, that a Court Martial verdict of acquittal might cause serious trouble in camp. Mr. Best also remarked at this interview that his hardest problem in Tule Lake was his staff. They gave him more trouble than all the Japanese put together.

Many of the members of the appointed staff were leaning to the opinion that the soldier would be acquitted. This attitude was strengthened by a young woman employee in the Statistics Section who spread the story that she had sent the Court Martial acquittal verdict to Washington. Since the Court Martial had not yet been held, this was obviously false. The young woman may have seen a report on the Board of Inquiry meeting of May 25. However, her story carried weight with many staff members and caused much concern over what the Japanese might do when this "news" reached them.<sup>1</sup>

What effect allowing the family to read the report of the Coroner's inquest had is not known. However, either from this report or from other Japanese witnesses, a rumor spread in the camp and almost resulted in the beating of the Japanese witness

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 4, pp. 1-2.



whose testimony had been unfavorable to Okamoto. This rumor which appeared in mid-June stated that this witness had testified that Okamoto had attempted to strike the soldier. A group of young men met and discussed beating up the witness. These self appointed vigilantes, however, were not themselves convinced of the truth of the rumor. The wife of one young man said, "They cannot believe that a Japanese would do such a thing."<sup>1</sup> The young witness was not beaten.

Early in June an intoxicated evacuee, said to be a quiet good-natured fellow when sober, attacked a soldier with a meat cleaver. The soldier was generally reputed to be a decent fellow and the act was quite unprovoked. The soldier was not injured seriously and the attacker was given a jail sentence. No informant expressed any resentment over this incident although "I" feared that it might stimulate a camp-wide search for sake stills which might annoy the people.<sup>2</sup> (The evacuee was rumored to have become intoxicated on "boot-leg sake.") No such search was made at this time.

#### COMMITTEE ORGANIZED ON REQUEST OF SPANISH EMBASSY

Early in June the Spanish Embassy requested the Administration that a committee of Tule Lake representative residents prepare a complete report on the Okamoto shooting which report, it was understood, would be used by the Spanish Consul in his report to the Japanese government. The Consul's request was announced at a meeting by Mr. Black. The colonists' reactions were mixed. Most persons were indifferent, believing that

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 19, pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., June 9, p. 1.



nothing much would come of it. However, members of the pressure group ~~preposed-eeemi~~ were definitely hostile to the suggestion, suspecting that this proposed committee might be used by the Administration as evidence that a "representative" committee did exist at Tule Lake, an eventuality which the pressure group, still stalwartly supporting the interned Negotiating Committee, wished to avoid at all costs. The fact that the proposal was announced by a member of the Administration added fuel to this suspicion.

A meeting was held June 12 and committee member elected from each ward. Some block meetings were held previous to this date. The reaction to one was observed. While calling at "I"'s home, "I"'s sister came in and asked him if he were going to the meeting. "No," I replied, "I don't go to any of those meetings."<sup>1</sup>

On June 14, "Y" who was not a member of the pressure group, related that Mr. Black had suggested the formation of a group of issei to comply with the request of the Spanish Consul. He implied that since the suggestion had come from the Administration the people were looking askance at the whole thing. He said there was a rumor that the ex-members of the Co-ordinating Committee were taking a prominent part in the formation of the committee, and that people feared it might turn out to be an extension of the Co-ordinating Committee.<sup>2</sup> On June 19, Mrs. "Q", an active agitator voiced the same sentiment. She said that the people were very angry "at the Administration's move to

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., June 10, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., June 14, pp. 2-3.



put a selected group on the Committee to see the Spanish Consul." They blamed Mr. Black for this.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Opler corroborated this suspicion and clarified the part of the ex-Coordinating Committee members:

"The committee to meet the Spanish Consul has been set up from the wards. The trouble is they have set up a sub-committee and very prominent on the list are the names, Yamatani, Akitsuki, and Okamoto. I don't like those guys on it. It looks as if Akitsuki is sticking out his neck again.

"The Spanish Consul wants to meet with a spokesman group. Maybe he's a little afraid for his own safety."<sup>2</sup>

Better informed and less prejudiced Japanese, like "K", took a more reasonable view of the matter and stated that the committee had been formed of responsible and trustworthy men. "K" gave an amusing description of how the ex-Coordinating Committee member's attempt to regain prominence had been received at the meeting:

"Yamatani, Akitsuki, and Okamoto were told right to their faces that the people didn't want them. . . Mr. Yamatani proposed before a certain body that if they would consent to allow him to negotiate with the Spanish Consul, he would do it gladly. He was told right then. . .

"They (ex-Coordinating Committee members) are conscious of what is going on, but they are looking for personal glory. They may want to tell the Japanese government that they represented Tule Lake and met the Spanish Consul to right the wrongs they have already committed. . .

"The negotiations are to be conducted by men who are already elected. They are prominent people whom the people trust."<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. "F", an intelligent older nisei, also expressed her confidence in the group which was selected. They had been

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., June 19, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., June 15, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., June 17, p. 1.



elected and it was all right. She added, however, that the men elected had taken the job unwillingly and that some of them wanted to resign. "It is all because of the men in the stockade. The camp will never be at peace until that is settled."<sup>1</sup>

A few days later Y stated that nobody was taking the Spanish Consul Committee very seriously. In fact, said he, nobody trusted the Spanish Consul anymore, even though he was supposed to look after the Japanese. "Everybody thinks the Okamoto case is a washout. Since everybody is saying that the chief Japanese witness said that Okamoto tried to attack the soldier, there is no chance for a verdict of guilty. After all, if Okamoto did attack the sentry, the sentry had a right to shoot him."<sup>2</sup>

"O", a conservative block manager either did not know of the attempt of some of the ex-Co-ordinating Committee members to get a prominent place on the Spanish Consul Committee or he chose not to mention it. He also expressed the opinion that the establishment of the Investigation Committee would have a calming effect on the people.

"I attended this meeting. As you know, the Japanese government has a great interest in this case. They have requested the Spanish Consul to make a detailed report and he has asked for a committee to make the detailed report to him. So, since the members of the Co-ordinating Committee had resigned, there were no representatives for the people. So, since nobody had responsibility, they suggested that each block send a spokesman who was a Japanese national.

"Then, June 4th (?) we had an election. Some blocks

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., June 21, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., June 23, p. 1.



elected a man and some blocks just send an observer to the meeting. All were Japanese nationals, mostly issei.

"Then they elected officers, president, etc. This committee is just temporary and they decided to disband after the completion of the investigation. Some of the people suggested at the meeting that they might remain as permanent Japanese spokesmen for the people, but I believe in the present situation, they hesitate to elect permanent delegates.

"They named eight men for the committee. There were no Co-ordinating Committee members on that. This committee was recognized officially by the approval of Mr. Best.

"Everybody is afraid of the future and they didn't want it to be permanent."

"It seems to me that very few people know about the details of how this was done (Okamoto shooting). They can't get the true facts. Besides they're afraid of the stockade. It's no use to fight against the Administration. Everybody just keeps their mouth shut and quiet. . . .

"And besides that, the Investigating Committee has been established and the people also believe WRA and the Army are taking care of it. The committee just started their investigation last week."<sup>1</sup>

A very interesting account of the sentiment of a part of the camp on this matter was given by "U", an ex-Santa Fe internee from Manzanar and a strong supporter of the "Q" pressure group. "U" is intelligent and well educated. The opinions and suspicions he voiced were shared by the pressure group, which was determined to have no body in Tule Lake which could even vaguely replace the interned Negotiating Committee - the "real representatives." It is <sup>possible</sup> ~~probably~~ that a considerable number of the colonists shared a part of "U"'s views even though they may not have been active members of the pressure group. "Y"'s remarks give some evidence of this.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ibid., June 20, pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> See pp.



The fact that the Spanish Consul on his previous visits to Tule Lake had given the supporters of the Negotiating Committee no assistance on the stockade issue had caused this group to lose confidence in him. The fact that a visit of the Spanish Consul had never been followed by any noticeable improvement in the lot of the inhabitants of Tule Lake, had probably caused many non-status quo people to regard his efforts with indifference. However, many people felt that out of courtesy to their only contact with the Japanese government, a committee should be formed.

"U" gives a detailed description of the suspicion and dislike with which the activities of the ex-Co-ordinating Committee were regarded by the supporters of the stockade internees and stresses the fundamental distrust felt toward the suggestion because it was made by Mr. Black, a member of the Administration. For the strong suspicion that the Administration wished to trick the Japanese into forming a "representative body" out of this Investigating Committee, there appears to be no evidence whatever. However, Mr. Black may have waited until the body was elected to tell them that the Consul desired only a written report. On the other hand, at the first meeting, Mr. Black may not have been informed on the Consul's specific wishes. The pique, felt over the fact that Captain Martin, DeAmat's subordinate, was eventually sent to Tule Lake to talk to the Committee, is interesting.

"People on the whole are very indifferent.

"I do feel this way, and after all the Japanese people are not foolish and dumb, and I don't want to consider the Japanese



race as dumb. They have to accept within a certain extent being in the enclosure, but they can't be fooled all the time.

"I came here March 31, 1944. But I know that the Consul De Amat was visiting here the latter part of 1943. One of the requests made by the same group of people who were seriously taking the responsibility to liquidate the stockade - that was the wish of most of the people in camp.

"Consul De Amat was requested strongly by the people among with many other problems brought to the Consul at that time.

"Unfortunately, I don't know the reason, but the Consul was not successful in meeting the wishes of the people in that particular point. He left Tule Lake without settling the stockade problem. In April of 1944 there was a reason on the part of the Co-ordinating Committee that they wished to conceal what they were doing toward the stockade problem and try to, in vain, promote themselves, their good name, and regain the confidence and popularity from the people of the center and to be recognized publicly both by the colonists and the Administration and also to be known as the real representatives of the Tule Lake Center, to the Japanese government if possible, through the consulate at San Francisco.

"The Co-ordinating Committee, which was, as you know, more or less appointed by the Administration in whom the public had no trust whatever, dogmatically requested a visit of the Consul again. Consul Amat -- we suppose that he knew that the Co-ordinating Committee wasn't a real representative body, because he knew they weren't real representatives elected by the people of the camp, ever since the stockade isolated place was opened by the Administration to confine what is known as trouble makers of the camp for "said to be" severance purposes. And therefore, we supposed that Consul Amat knew that we don't have real representatives here in this camp.

"He replied to the letter sent by the Co-ordinating Committee in April, 'I am not sure which one are the real representatives in the camp. Therefore please, if necessary, elect representatives whereby I, the Consul, can interview them.'

"On May, 22, when Mr. Okamoto was shot, at that time the people of the camp wholeheartedly hoped for the immediate visit of the Consul. On the following day of that happening, the rumor in the camp was that the shooting of Mr. Okamoto, even though he was second generation caused immediate attention of the Japanese government which requested the Spanish Embassy to make a thorough investigation of the facts. We don't know where we got that information but that was the rumor all over camp. (Short wave radio?? R. H.)



"However, Mr. Black, with the assistance of the former members of the Co-ordinating Committee called a special meeting of all the block managers. And at that meeting the block managers were requested to help in his own block to choose representatives to receive an audience of the Consul upon his arrival which was said to be in the very near future. And also they were told that these particular representatives were elected to make an investigation of the Okamoto shooting to be reported to the consulate at San Francisco.

The people were not told that this was to be a written Report and that the Consul did not intend to come immediately.

"Each block manager came back to his block and made all kinds of request to the people so that the people thought that the Consul was coming in the very near future. Therefore, it was courtesy on the part of the Japanese people to elect representatives, which they did. But many blocks did not vote.

"Some people resented to electing representatives. They felt there might be some trick on the part of the Administration, and by some members of the Co-ordinating Committee, who were at that meeting without portfolio.

"A few days later, the representatives elected by the blocks met in a mass meeting and elected ward chairmen. The ward chairmen elected the chairman of the whole group. And the representatives discovered at that particular meeting that they had been elected with the simple aim of making a written report to the Consul and that the Consul was not coming.

"Another thing -- the principal aim of Mr. Black to call such a special meeting of all the block managers was to form the idea of the coming or visiting of the Consul to this center or making of the written report of the center on the Okamoto case, what the case may be. He used this opportunity as a motive to try to form a representative body for the Japanese which is needed so badly in this camp from the point of view of the Administration. They wished to form it for all time.

"At this meeting it also was brought up by the chairman and a few other members who might have had a good understanding with the Administration or Mr. Black - they actually brought up in the meeting that these representatives should continue, not only in making the written report of the Okamoto case to the Consul but also as a real governing body of representatives for the camp until such a time as some other representatives were to be elected by the people.

"But by this time not only the representatives but the people as a whole knew and had found out that the Consul was not coming, but instead, had asked for a report.



"However, on account of a few representatives who actually said, 'The continuance of our existence after the finishing of our report will be overruling the ideas and principles by which we were elected by the block residents. Therefore we must dissolve as representatives as soon as we send out written report to the Consul.' Which was so decided."

The Investigating Committee presented it's report to the Spanish Consul on July 13, 1944. Much of this report has been reproduced in the section just completed. Since other portions may be used in the final draft, the complete copy is added here.

#### Synthesis of Okamoto Shooting:

It would be most desirable to obtain at least a stenographic copy of the Coroner's Inquest so that the evidence which led the acquittal of the soldier, Goe, might be put before the reader. This may be obtained at a later date, since the Administration has a copy.

The first reaction of the colony to the shooting of Okamoto was a confusion of shock, anger, sorrow, and fear of passing through the sentry guarded gates and meeting a like fate. For several weeks after the occurrence even the sight of an Army uniform was a source of irritation. This reaction was quickly dealt with by the Administration which stationed Caucasian and Japanese members of the WRA police force at the gates, prevailed upon Colonel Austin<sup>to</sup> place selected sentries at the gate and to forbid soldiers to enter the camp as they previously had been accustomed to do. About a month after the shooting, hostility toward the soldiers was no longer voiced. On the whole the reaction of the colonists was one of quiet and dignity. Part of this constraint was no doubt due to respect for the dead.



Another factor was the consciousness of the futility of protest by an unarmed people against the Army.

The Administration realized the gravity of the occurrence instantly and embarked on a policy which was entirely successful in avoiding additional trouble for themselves or for the colony. The facts were announced honestly and promptly; reasonable persons were given no cause to lay any guilt on WRA; kindness, consideration and courtesy were shown the bereaved family, which in no instance, passed the bounds of good taste; the evacuees' fear of passing through the gates was given immediate consideration; Mr. Best gave permission to hold a public funeral, called a half-holiday on the day, and attended himself, delivering an unmistakably sincere speech which impressed many of the colonists deeply; the soldiers were forbidden to enter the colony proper after the funeral.

The Divisional Responsible Men, who formally disbanded at the end of April 1944 made an attempt to re-instate themselves in a position of prominence by forming an organization to protect the workers of the project. Three ex-members of the Co-ordinating Committee placed this proposition before Mr. Best but were refused recognition. Although the proposed body disavowed all political ambition, Mr. Best believed the formation of this body would be interpreted as a political move.

The attempt of the pressure groups to lay blame on Mr. Best and the unorganized criticisms voiced by Mr. Best's enemies had little effect on the general populace; most people were of the opinion that Mr. Best had all that could be expected



of him under the circumstances. Some criticism was heard over WRA's attempt to evade responsibility, but this never reached serious proportions. For several weeks after the shooting, many informants feared that trouble might be precipitated, but no factor strong enough to bring about any demonstration made its appearance. During this period the most frequent remark made by the Japanese was: "It all depends on the verdict." Over a month passed before the Court Martial was held, and as the weeks passed, this statement was made more and more rarely. Probably cynical opinions, such as those which were volunteered as early as two days after the shooting: that the soldier would be released or that he would be given a sentence which he would not be obliged to serve, slowly gained the ascendancy. The hopelessness of gaining redress from or taking revenge upon the Army was apparent to all. Much is expressed in the following terse statement made by a Japanese, "What can we do? We're only Japs?" When the verdict of acquittal was released early in July, over a month after the shooting, it caused little surprise and there were no repercussions. It was, however, overshadowed by the excitement aroused by the murder of Mr. Hitomi.

The request of the Spanish Embassy that an investigation be made by a representative group of Japanese citizens and that a report be prepared made very little impression on the colony. The fact that the announcement was made through the Administration and that certain ex-members of the Co-ordinating Committee attempted unsuccessfully to attain prominent positions on the Investigation Committee aroused great suspicion



on the part of the chief pressure group. The greater proportion of the colonists, however, appear to have regarded the committee and its report as harmless but futile. When the report was given to the Consul in mid-July it aroused scarcely any interest.

#### MINOR EVENTS AND ATTITUDES OF JUNE, 1944

During June the unrest, discontent, and hatred which culminated in the murder of Yaozo Hitomi, the general manager of the Co-operative Enterprises developed in an interwoven sequence of events which merits separate treatment. To interrupt the narration of this development with socially significant but unrelated details, would mar the picture and confuse the reader. These unrelated events and attitudes will therefore be presented first.

#### Ward Chairmen Attempt to By-Pass Mr. Huycke

Early in June the ward chairmen made an attempt to escape from the need of dealing with Mr. Huycke, whose ineptitude and insincerity in his position as head of Community Activities had long been a source of aggravation to most of the colonists who had contact with him. Mr. Huycke's unpopularity, which appears to have begun when he was in charge of housing at the time when the transferees entered camp, remained with him when he became head of the Community Activities Section. Most informants disliked him; many despised him. He was, moreover, almost universally disliked by the Appointed Personnel. With his immediate superior, Mr. Black, he appeared to be on excellent terms. Mr. Huycke strove to give an impression of great achievement in providing recreation for the evacuees; but, in actuality, he accomplished very little. This, however, does not entirely account for his unpopularity. His habit of



promising much and doing little, his oily manner and insincerity, and above all, the fact that he unsuccessfully attempted to pose as an admirer of the Japanese, telling them that he was a "Jap-lover" and not a "Jap-hater" were contributory causes. The general scorn and disgust with which he was regarded by most of the Japanese who came in contact with him, spread to many who did not know him personally.

In this particular instance, the ward chairmen, noting that little attention was paid to requests or complaints which they made to Mr. Huycke, decided that he was deliberately withholding them from Mr. Best. They thereupon called on Mr. Best and requested that the Community Activities section be taken over by Mr. Best personally. Mr. Best refused them, although he is reported to have admitted that Mr. Huycke was slow in channeling things to him but "he would do his best." An account by Miss Iwohara, who developed a strong dislike to Mr. Huycke when he was on the Advisory Council and she was Secretary to the Co-ordinating Committee follows:

"The ward chairmen tried to get Mr. Huycke out. They found out that most of the peoples' complaints which were supposed to be channeled to Mr. Best were just going to Mr. Huycke who bottlenecked them. So the ward chairmen thought that Community Organizations ought to be put under direct supervision of the Project Director.

"So the ward chairmen got together one morning and called on Mr. Huycke. Mr. Huycke said Mr. Province had suggested the same thing, but that Mr. Best had been against the idea because he thought it would be disadvantageous.

"So the group of ward chairmen got together the next day and got an interview with Mr. Best. When they made this statement to Mr. Best, Mr. Best said that the plan of putting Community Organizations under the Project Director had been devised by himself, but when he sent the plan to Washington, Washington did not approve. So now we know that Mr. Huycke was lying. Mr. Best said there seemed to be a clash of personalities and



he admitted that Mr. Huycke was slow in channeling things to him but that he would do his best."<sup>1</sup>

Several months later Mr. Huycke's Japanese staff rose in revolt and almost left him in a body. At this time they addressed an appeal to the Washington office. Mr. Huycke chose to regard this phenomenon as the result of pressure put on his staff by pro-Japanese groups.

#### Stockade Developments

Attitudes favoring the release of the men still kept in the stockade continued to be expressed by persons who were not attached to the pressure groups working actively for their release. On June 15, a young nisei girl, stated that the Daihyo Sha Kai had had a great deal of support in November and added that the people were becoming more and more <sup>n</sup>agreed over the continued imprisonment and innocent people in the stockade. She was sure that if Kai and Kuratomi were released they would not attempt to make trouble. She was so moved when speaking of the imprisoned men that her eyes filled with tears.<sup>2</sup> On June 20, the conservative Mr. "O", who several months before had not advocated release, made the following statement.

"Unless they release the men from the stockade I don't think there is any hope to organize a Central Committee. . .

When asked how strong a part giri played in the peoples' sentiment toward the internees, "O" said:

"Suppose those former Negotiating Committee in the stockade. Suppose right now we elect another representative from each block and organize a Central Committee. In that case we double-cross them (the men in the stockade). We admit that they had criminal intention. That means giri. That's why, for the

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., June 15, pp. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., p. 1.



benefit of them we cannot do it right now, unless the WRA releases these men. That is the Japanese point of view right now.

"I wish the WRA would release those men. When they tried to organize the committee (in May) everything happened that way because of girl."<sup>1</sup>

An interesting account of food trouble in the stockade was given by "I" who was in an excellent position to get information since he was employed in a responsible position in the Mess Operations:

"I got Hayward to crack down on the stockade boys the other day. They thought they were going to run Mess Operations. They wanted us to give them their ration daily instead of weekly. I'll be damned if I'll weigh out 37 pounds of rice every day and 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds of sugar.

"Sugimoto, one of the public agitators number 1, sent a letter to the Spanish Consul, telling him the boys in the stockade were getting only 14¢ a day for food. I told Hayward to tell Best that the stockade is getting food on the same scale as the colony. If the Spanish Consul thinks that's not food enough, have him come in and look at the books.

"Confidentially, I've been giving those boys a break. I knew their only pleasure was eating so I've even advanced them sugar on their next week's ration. But not anymore. Since Sugimoto started to make trouble, I've not advanced, and they've been without sugar since Thursday and won't get any till Tuesday."<sup>2</sup>

The above account is noteworthy since the hunger strike which the internees initiated in August was rumored to have had its source in a disagreement between the internees and the Administration on food.

#### Indications of a Second Pressure Group and Conflict

Although data are very difficult to obtain, there are indications that for several months two separate organized groups had been working for the release of the stockade internees. One

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 20, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., June 4, p. 6.



of these has been called the "Q" group. This group was comparatively well organized and had among its members a noticeable preponderance of persons from Jerome. The other group appears to have been headed by Mr. Tsuda, an old Tule Lake resident and ex-Daihyo Sha Kai member who was himself imprisoned in the stockade for \_\_\_ months. Tsuda is reported to have worked hard for the release of the men remaining in the stockade. He was hampered, however, by his unsavory reputation - he is reputed to have run professional gambling joints before evacuation - and by the growing suspicion that he was collaborating with the Administration. The facts are not known. How much of his unpopularity was due to deliberate gossip spread by the "Q" group, who may have been jealous of his efforts to obtain release for which they themselves desired to be credited, it is impossible to say. The first indication of this intrigue was brought to the attention of the writer by a statement made by Mrs. "Q":

"Now the boys in the stockade are getting mad at Mr. Tsuda. When Mr. Tsuda came out of the stockade, they thought he would be able to do something for them. But he hasn't been able to do a thing. So they're getting mad at him now."<sup>1</sup>

Less than a week later, Mrs. "Q" accused Tsuda of attempting to persuade the boys in the stockade to withdraw their appeal to the American Civil Liberties Union. In doing this, he was supposed to be following the instructions of Mr. Best. One of the internees followed his advice and wrote to his family to withdraw his complaint to the American Civil Liberties Union. Mrs. "Q"'s brother, however, refused and wrote to her, telling

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., June 19, p. 1.



of Tsuda's attempt.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Tsuda continued to be regarded as a stooge of Mr. Best by the "Q" group and was looked upon with suspicion by other individuals interested in the stockade developments. Mr. Robertson, however, held to the opinion that Tsuda had always tried to do his best and that his evil reputation was largely due to jealousy.

#### Birth of George Kuratomi's child.

Another minor event connected with the stockade internees was the birth of George Kuratomi's illegitimate child. The mother was an attractive young woman named Singer Terada. Mr. Kuratomi had repeatedly refused to marry her. For several days before the delivery Miss Terada staged a "sit-down strike" at the Internal Security Office stating that she would not leave until George married her. The baby, a girl, was born late in the afternoon of June 13. When Mr. Robertson heard the news he went to the stockade and asked the Police Guard to tell George. The guard said that it was not important. His reluctance to marry Miss Terada later caused Mr. Kuratomi some inconvenience. In order to file papers for the habeas corpus suit which was undertaken by the American Civil Liberties Union, the lawyer had to have a statement from George or from a close relative. Probably because mail was not released from the stockade, George could not get this statement to Mr. Besig. Since he and Miss Terada were not married, she could not make the application for him.

#### Rumors

Two interesting rumors were current during June. The rumor



that an announcement of an exchange ship would be made continued and grew stronger. It was also widely rumored that the Administration was planning to grant the colonists certain privileges. The latter notion may have been stimulated by the consideration shown by the Administration at the time of the Okamoto shooting. Nothing came of either rumor.

On June 3, two nisei girls asked if there were any truth in the rumor that an exchange ship was coming soon. In the weeks that followed the question was asked at almost every contact the writer had with Japanese. On June 23, "Y" said:

"I think the next transport might come the end of this year or the beginning of the next. That would make the people feel better.

His wife added:

"I bet the camp is going to be in an uproar if it does come."

"Y" concluded:

"It has to come, otherwise the morale is going down. The Japanese government must realize that."<sup>1</sup>

The stimulating factors for this rumor are unknown. One staff member stated that the Examiner had printed a statement that Japan was making out another repatriation list asking for college graduates and persons who owned property in Japan.

On June 8, "K" reported that rumors were flourishing that the fence was going to be taken down some time in July and that colonists would be allowed to make excursions to the nearby hills. He had heard that the janitors would be allowed to go out first; "their names are even being put down." He stated that even if only the janitors were allowed to go, the people would feel better, "because then they would feel that someday

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., June 23, p. 2.



maybe they could go too." "K" had considerable faith in these rumors, and stated that they were already beginning to make the people feel better.<sup>1</sup>

The writer checked these rumors with Mr. Robertson and was told that the Administration was <sup>not</sup> even remotely entertaining any such ideas.

#### Attitudes on Mr. Best

On June 23 "Y" informed the writer that he had been told by a friend that a group of young men had written to Mr. Ickes, telling him that he should fire Best. "Y"'s informant had stated that he himself had signed this letter. Whether this communication was sponsored by a pressure group is not known. Early in June another young man, like "Y" an ex-Leupp internee remarked that he had heard that Mr. Robertson had been demoted because he did not get on with Mr. Best and because he got on too well with the Japanese.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. "F" an older nisei woman stated that she was sure that matters could never go well in camp as long as Mr. Best remained in his position of Project Director. The people didn't trust him. Moreover, they knew that he was afraid of them. "If only Mr. Robertson could be the Project Director."<sup>3</sup> Although more informants cannot be quoted it was quite apparent that by the end of June Mr. Best had almost completely lost the respect he had gained with some people because of his considerate action at the time of the Okamoto funeral.

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 8, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., June 8, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., June 21, p. 2.



### Status and the Pressure Groups

Little is known of the activities of the pressure groups during the month of June. The "Q" group went forward with its preparations to appeal to the Civil Liberties Union for assistance in the stockade matter. Undoubtedly, the group also did all it could to increase the unpopularity of Mr. Best, whose presence as Project Director was regarded as one of their chief obstacles. There were, however, few overt signs that this group was active. The following remark was made on status by "U", the ex-Santa Fe internee who was intimately associated with the "Q" pressure group:

"If the Administration treated us as loyal Japanese, loyal to Japan, they would have no trouble at all. But they still think we are loyal to America. They should treat us like prisoners of war in a certain sense. They should treat us according to the Geneva convention and International Law. Our mind is clear now; we are disloyal.

On the abortive attempt of the Divisional Responsible Men to establish an organization, Mr. "U" said:

"If any little representative organization or any little gathering of people now having close approach to Mr. Best, they are not hastening making the camp better, but they are prolonging the trouble. They are petit politicians."

### The Jam Agitator

An amusing example of the petty agitation which was carried on by some exhibitionistic individuals was recounted by "I":

"There's a guy in mess 42 who is really a chest beating agitator. He keeps demanding more jam for his mess, when he knows damn well there's no more jam in the warehouse. He insists it's put on the menu. Then when the people don't get their jam, he makes speeches telling them all he's trying to do for them."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 14, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., June 4, p. 5.



REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ALLIED SUCCESSES IN EUROPE

On the 21st of June Mr. Markley, the Reports Officer called the writer aside and asked her opinion of what the effect of the increasing success of the Allied Nations would be upon those of the colonists who were still on the fence with regard to relocation. He explained that he had been moved to ask the question because a number of the young people on his staff had resigned recently. He wondered if this were due to parental pressure, their parents not wishing them to appear to be too closely connected with the Administrative Staff when camp feeling might be rising because of Axis reverses. If these resignations took place it is more likely that they were due to the bad reputation which the Reports Office was developing since one of its chief employees was Mr. Tateishi an inu of particularly odious reputation. It is also possible that the question was put because WRA authorities in Washington were considering the effect of news of Axis defeats on the Tule Lake population and had asked Markley to report on the matter.

However, one extremely interesting change of attitude was manifested three days later by "I" one of the writer's oldest acquaintances and frankest informants. "I", a No-No and a repatriate had expressed bitter resentment over the treatment he, as a Japanese-American had received in this country since the outbreak of the war. On one occasion in September, 1943, before he was segregated from Gila, he had told the writer that he hoped that Japan would win the war just so the Caucasians would realize they weren't as good as they thought they were. But after nine months residence in Tule Lake, "I" changed his



mind. The manner in which he led up to his declaration was very interesting. At the beginning of the conversation he complained over the sorry state of the attitude of the inhabitants of Tule Lake:

"I'm getting sick of the attitude of the people. They are cutting each others throats."<sup>1</sup>

He then launched into a denunciation of the Co-op which will be quoted in the discussion of the Hitomi killing. He continued:

"When I came here I expected to find quite a different atmosphere. When the people realized they were here for the same reason, I expected that they would be willing to help a guy when he needed it. Instead, now if you've got five dollars they'll think of how they can get it away from you.

"Some of the smartest people I know are getting disgusted. These are real intelligent people. They came here and expected to find a cooperative atmosphere and they're pretty well disgusted. Their remarks add up to something like this: 'It's not a case now of whether I want to go back to the old country. It's a case of whether I can stay here long enough to go back to the old country and still retain my self-respect.

"The trouble is they expect you to act like a damn radical and go out and kill every hakujin on the other side of the fence and when you don't act like that you are an inu.

After this introduction, "I" stated dramatically,

"To tell you the truth, I'm considering relocation."

"The only reason I'd consider relocation is that I've got a pretty good thing coming up. As you should know by this time, the majority of nisei came in here because they didn't want to go into the Army. That's one of the main reasons why the nisei are here, 98% of them, myself included. I couldn't see fit to pack a gun for something I didn't see my way clear to. If they had treated us differently, I would have volunteered. Now, seeing as how they're deferring people over 26, I think I might take a chance.

"You see, if the war lasts three more years, I'll be 33. Then I get deported to Japan. It'll take me ten years to get on my feet. It seems to me Germany is going to pull a flopperoo. I wouldn't want to be here when that happens. I don't care if Japan has 17 kinds of Yamato Damashi, she isn't going to be able to buck fighting three big nations.

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<sup>1</sup>A remarkably prophetic statement, considering it was made seven days before Hitomi's murder.



"Believe it or not, a fellow told me the other day that Japan was going to have a decisive victory and that the war would be over in seven days! A girl told me the other day, 'You're so thoroughly Americanized, I don't believe you belong here.'

"My coming here was in itself a defense mechanism. It was another retaliatory action to get even with the way I'd been treated previously. On the other hand, I feel that in retaliating I not only hurt the government, but eventually, I'll hurt myself more."

"The only people Japan actually wants are those she can use immediately after the war, diplomats and persons with Engineering Degrees. I've been telling people, if Japan should lose the war, where there's a very good chance of her doing right now, and if we were to relocate and were placed on the same standard of living as the negro in this country, we'd still be able to have a better standard of living than the poor people in Japan. Besides, when the Japanese went to the south, they were never treated as the negroes were."

"I" assured the writer that the camp life and the unfavorable war news appeared to be affecting some of the older peoples' minds:

"A lot of the old men are getting goofier and goofier. They stand around in the latrines and mutter to themselves. I think they're losing their minds."

When the writer asked "I" what the possible effect of the news of a Japanese victory in the Pacific might have on the camp's population, he said:

"I'd hate to see it happen. In spite of the fact that the Internal Security is on the lookout for short wave broadcasts, if the local broadcasts were to confirm the victory and the shortwave broadcasts were to exaggerate it, I don't think there'd be no holding the pressure gang in here."

"When asked what the effect of a pronounced Allied victory might be, "I" guessed:

"I've often wondered. If there were a very decisive victory, I think there'd be a great breakdown in morale. Especially among certain people who have decided that Japan couldn't lose. With the breakdown in morale there would come a time when some of them would try in some way to avenge the defeat of Japan. When that happens, they'd better start building more fences."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., June 25, pp. 1-3.



The next day, when "K", a sincere repatriate was asked how the course of the war was affecting the colonists, he said:

"Those persons who will change their minds now are no good to either country. These boys who fluctuate are no good. You'll find there are many of that kind. You know, only half of the people here are registered to go to Japan. They just want to wait and see how it turns out. If Japan wins they want to go to Japan and if the United States wins, they want to stay here. It's disgraceful. It makes me ashamed of the Japanese race, especially the issei.

"But if America didn't evacuate the second generation, then probably most of them would have sworn to support the United States, and would have fought in this war. Now they're willing to go out whether they're despised or not.

"I've talked to many of them. They say, 'I'm going back to Japan.' Then I ask, 'Then why aren't you studying?'

"They're not studying. They're just fooling around and gambling and having a good time."

"K" remarked at this interview that he had just had a long argument with an issei friend over some of Japan's policies. "K" had felt that some of Japan's policies were not above criticism.

"If I go to Japan and speak as I've spoken today I'll be thrown in jail. There is no question of that. I think the country should be improved in several ways. But if I weren't in love with Japan I wouldn't criticize here. Yet, if I did talk like I talked today, (in Japan) I should be thrown in jail."

"K" added that this was the one thing that caused him concern over his decision to expatriate. Since childhood, he had been honest and outspoken and he feared that he will be too inclined to speak frankly when he arrives in Japan.<sup>1</sup>

"Y", a kibe1, when discussing the war situation, said:

"I think more people will ask for relocation, especially the nisei. But the majority of the residents won't give up. I think there are a lot of people, even if we lose Kyushu,

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., June 26, pp. 1-2.



Manila and Singapore -- we won't give up. The bombings don't mean nothing. But there will be a lot of people who'll say, 'Well, the Allies are winning; let's go out.'<sup>1</sup>

#### SOME ADMINISTRATIVE ATTITUDES

A meeting of the Community Management Division held on June 20, betrayed some significant Administrative Attitudes.

The meeting opened with the announcement that Mr. Huycke, head of Community Activities, had been raised to a P4 rating. It will be remembered that at the beginning of June, Mr. Huycke had become so unpopular with the evacuees that the war chairman had attempted unsuccessfully to get from under his jurisdiction.

Mr. Bagley, the Head of Welfare gave a short speech in which he stated that his section had a case load of 2,200 to 3,000 cases per month. One possible means of reducing this load was being contemplated: to take employment from single persons or couples and give it to the heads of families of four. "It costs less to have a single person on welfare than a family of four." In other centers, said Mr. Bagley, families in possession of a cash sum of \$500 were still allowed to become Welfare cases, it being assumed that they might employ this case surplus for relocation. This surplus was not allowed at Tule Lake. Moreover, Tule Lake was the only center which suffered from an employment shortage. Mr. Bagley stated, in addition, that his department was busily employed on the problem of stimulating relocation. They had initiated a study of 50 families of Tule Lake residents who according to the records had not applied for repatriation. However, when they began on the study they found that 43 of these 50 families had

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<sup>1</sup>June 23, p. 2.



actually applied. None of those interviewed were open to any persuasion.

When Mr. Bagley had finished his speech Mr. Black opened the floor for questions. A teacher inquired if there were any positions which were not filled. Mr. Black said there were many openings for clerical workers and that it was very difficult to get teachers for the nursery school although many of the evacuee girls were qualified for the work. If any applicant for work was offered a job and refused it, he was not eligible for welfare. The great majority of the unemployed persons were in the unskilled labor groups.

The questions now turned to the subject of the stockade. It was apparent that many of the staff members, particularly the teachers, were extremely curious over the policy of the Administration in regard to the internees, over the treatment they received and over the process of internment and release. A member of the police force asked Mr. Bagley what could be done for four internees who had broken their glasses. Bagley explained a complicated process for procuring glasses but was interrupted by a staff member who suggested that in consideration of the limited view in the stockade, the internees had seen just about all they could see and had no need for glasses. This remark caused some laughter. Mr. Black then announced that a number of the aliens in the stockade were soon to be removed to Santa Fe, from where, in course of time, they might go to Crystal City to join their families. This, stated Black, would be very nice because at Crystal City they might lead a really normal family life. (When this was carried out it was



not generally regarded as a piece of good fortune either by the persons removed to Santa Fe or by their friends and neighbors remaining in Tule Lake.)

A teacher then asked point blank why persons were put in the stockade and how they were released. Mr. Black, appearing very nervous and ill at ease explained that internment in the stockade rested entirely on the judgment of Mr. Best and that the project director had full power to put a colonist there and keep him there just as long as he considered that his presence was a danger or detriment to the peace of the colony. Another teacher then asked what kind of trial was given the interned men. Mr. Black replied that their records were examined by a committee consisting of the Project Attorney, the head of Community Management and the Chief of Police. These three men then made their decision and recommended either continued detention or release. However, the final approval of Mr. Best was required for all releases. To questions about the internees' recreation Mr. Black replied that the men led a pretty happy life, playing baseball and basketball, waving and signalling in Japanese characters to their friends inside the center. He added that construction had begun on a new stockade situated near the entrance of the camp. This construction included a jail capable of holding twelve persons.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE HITOMI MURDER

The Hitomi murder which occurred on July 3, climaxed a surge of tension and unease which began in the latter part of May and increased steadily until the end of June at which time the atmosphere of the camp had reached a peak of fantastic unreality.

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 20, pp. 3-5.



The first symptom of popular unrest manifested itself in an unprecedented amount of uncomplimentary gossip about the staff of the Co-operative Enterprises and the inu in general. The bitterness and vituperative tone of this gossip which was indulged in by the even the most conservative of individuals completely overshadowed even that of the tense period of mid-April. Then, beginning in mid-June a series of assaults was committed upon persons suspected of being inu; these men were waylaid at night and severely beaten by mysterious assailants who could not be apprehended by the police. With attitudes ranging from acid relish to puzzled disapproval each new beating was recounted. An ominous and almost psychopathic atmosphere pervaded the camp and, toward the end of June, when the chief topics of conversation were the latest beatings and guesses as to who would be next, the tension became almost unbearable. Several informants remarked, "I wish I could get out of this place." Even in the most conservative homes the evil doings of the dogs was the chief topic of conversation. Discussions of the blacklists, which were supposed to contain the names of the "dogs" in order of their guilt, were common. Whispered hints that one of the assaults might end in murder were heard occasionally. The ordinary camp resident himself did not make threats of murder, nor did he know who was compiling the hypothetical lists. But even though he might disapprove of the beatings, he joined wholeheartedly in the gossip and every new story of a particularly dastardly action on the part of a "dog" was enthusiastically passed along. Whenever a person was beaten, the news spread rapidly and the details of the story and of the victims' misdeeds which had caused the beating



were enlarged and distorted in the manner of a folk tale. Many persons, especially nisei women expressed shock and disapprobation, but the most usual reaction to a new beating was, "Well, I see another dog got what was coming to him."

As has been stated, the specific surge of public feeling which culminated in the murder began late in May about a week before the Okamoto shooting. The fundamental causes, however, had a long history; some of them extended back to the first few weeks after segregation. The three most significant of these causes were: (1) General hostility to the Japanese Staff of the Co-operative Enterprises; (2) General hatred of the stool-pigeons, the inu or dogs who tattled to the Administration; (3) The presence of the small but well organized, underground, pro-Negotiating Committee pressure group, and the conscious or unconscious support given to the propaganda spread by this group by many of the camp residents. At times, during the eight months of Tule Lake's existence as a segregation center, these factors developed separately and at times they combined to produce both the events and attitudes which preceded the murder.

The hatred which a large number of the transferees developed toward the old Tule Lake residents very soon after their arrival has been described.<sup>1</sup> This hatred was partly based on the belief that many of the old Tuleans had chosen to remain in camp not out of desire to return to Japan but merely because they did not want to move, that they were fence-sitters and unworthy to share the same camp with the transferees, that because of their convictions they were predisposed to partiality toward the Administration

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<sup>1</sup>See pp. 15-19 of the pre-incident discussion.



and were willing to act as informers. The initial distrust of the Co-operative Enterprises has also been described.<sup>1</sup> This sprang from several factors: The fact that the Tule Lake Co-operative offered a number of seemingly expensive items for sale some of which like mops, pails and brooms, the transferees had been accustomed to receive from the WRA at the projects from which they came. The sale of certain wares which some of the colonists considered unnecessary luxuries which tempted them to spend their small resources foolishly was also resented.<sup>2</sup> The large proportion of old Tule Lake residents employed by the Co-op was resented by the unemployed newcomers and encouraged the popular belief that these men had become so well entrenched in their lucrative positions that they had refused to move from Tule Lake. Many colonists believed that the men holding high positions in the Co-op were making more money by grafting in Tule Lake than they could make if they relocated. The Co-op was also accused of nepotism and an almost fantastic amount of graft.

In early December, when the leaders of the Daihyo Sha Kai had been interned, and the puzzled and disorganized remnants of the organization were attempting to keep the unhappy people to the status quo, the Co-op earned the abiding hatred of the pro-status quo group by standing strongly against them. Representatives of the Daihyo Sha Kai approached the Co-op Board of Directors and demanded that the Co-op cease the selling of "luxury" items so that the economically hard pressed people would feel less tempted to break the status-quo. According to Dr. Opler, the

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>For expression of this attitude in a Daihyo Sha Kai meeting, see p. 19 of Main Report.



granting of these demands would have brought about the financial ruin of the Co-op. The Board of Directors refused to take the responsibility for an action of such importance and put the proposition up to the people. When the vote was held on December 12, the proposal of the Daihyo Sha was defeated by a ratio of 9 to 1, carrying in only five blocks.<sup>1</sup> By their strong stand by the propaganda they put out before the election, the members of the Co-op Board of Directors increased their unpopularity with the pressure group. However, in this matter, they did not incur unanimous popular resentment, since many of the colonists were against the status quo.

In late December and early January when certain Japanese co-operated actively with the Administration in a successful attempt to break the status quo, the list of residents bitterly hated by the pro-status quo adherents increased. The Civic Organizations staff, Shimada, Namekawa, Furakawa, Maeda and Naydo, the Co-op officials, Akitsuki, Yamatani, Ikemoto and Hitomi, and certain ex-members of the Daihyo Sha Kai among whom Yamatani and Takahashi were most prominent, became known as dogs, par excellence, or in camp parlance, "number one inu." This sentiment was held by the pro-status quo supporters from the beginning of the political coup which resulted in the defeat of the status quo. It's growth among the bulk of the people was gradual and culminated in a general rage which in the middle of April 1944, was making

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed account see pp. 141-149 of Main Report.

<sup>2</sup>The history of the decline of the Co-ordinating Committee is too long and involved to outline here. The reader is referred to the detailed treatment in the Main Report and for specific expression of the chronological developments of hostility to pp. 204F-205, 266-277, 284, 317-320.



itself shown by repeated threats of beating up the members of the Co-ordinating Committee, Messrs. Akitsuki, Shimada, Naydo, Namekawa, Yamatani, Okamoto, Naydo, and their advisor, Mr. Takahashi.<sup>1</sup> After the resignation of this body, hostile sentiment against them on the part of the general public declined. From the date of the resignation of the Co-ordinating Committee at the end of April until the Okamoto shooting which occurred May 24, the camp entered into a period of comparative serenity.

However, even during this calm period the inu were still denounced frequently. In mid-April "K" criticized the Co-op strongly and remarked that the older members of the Police Force were suspected of too friendly relations with the Administration. At this time "K" also made a most remarkable prophesies of the sociological future of the camp when he stated on April 12:

"Frankly speaking, you may convey to Mr. Robertson, that if there is any trouble here, the trouble will be against the Japanese only.

"It will not affect the Administration in any way. No demonstration will be made.....

"The only thing that will kill it is for the Administration to act in time to hasten the segregation of the Yes-Yes group, the American loyalists. If they don't it will come to a head. The only other way is to have the Army continually patrol the camp.....The only thing to do is to get the Yes-Yes group out."<sup>2</sup>

At this period the first beating in which a man was assaulted at night by mysterious assailants and injured so seriously that he needed hospitalization took place.<sup>3</sup> Details are not known.

<sup>1</sup>The history of the decline of the Co-ordinating Committee is too long and involved to outline here. The reader is referred to the detailed treatment in the Main Report and for specific expression of the chronological developments of hostility to pp. 204F-205, 266-277, 284, 317-320.

<sup>2</sup>See Main Report, pp. 324, 325; also R.Hankey, Notes, April, 12, p. 3.  
<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 37. Other individuals had no doubt been assaulted during the troubled period before and after the breaking of the status quo. However, this is the first of the peculiar type of beating in which a man was set upon, and beaten, after which the assailants made their escape. Former beatings usually were group affairs in which several people participated on both sides. (Check)



The man was reputed to be the brother of a man who showed the movies in camp and "K" thought he had been beaten by members of the "Yes-Yes" group.

Mr. Kawai, the head of Housing who had taken an active anti-status quo view in January was denounced by "N" early in May.<sup>1</sup> The Civic Organizations was criticized by pro-status quo men because it refused to appoint ex-stockade internees or ex-Daihyo Sha Kai members to offices when they had been selected by the people.<sup>2</sup> The ex-Co-ordinating Committee and the Internal Security were again criticized in the presence of the writer in late May. The underground pressure group, working unceasingly for the release of the stockade internees frequently voiced ominous threats against the dogs. The following remarks made May 24/are typical and merit repetition here:

"The Co-ordinating Committee kept their positions altogether too long, not knowing they were not wanted. No matter how well educated they were, they didn't know what they were doing."

"I don't think one of them will ever repatriate."

"Not while I'm alive."<sup>3</sup>

The attempt made by the Divisional Responsible Men to form a labor organization was regarded as a blatant effort to regain a position of political prominence by the "Q" pressure group. It did not affect their general position with the people however, since it was not publicized.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., p. 345.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pp. 352-353.

<sup>3</sup> See Main Report pp. 324-325

<sup>4</sup> ibid., pp. 398-404.



The Rise of Gossip about the inu

In first two weeks of June, when the writer visited homes where she was considered an old friend, the conversation was almost monopolized by gossip about the evil doings of the inu. On June 4, "I"'s wife and her sister spoke with astonishing bitterness. Both of these young women are nisei, and inclined to disapprove heartily of agitation. "I"'s wife said that they had thought that when they came to Tule Lake they would be through with inus, but now they found that there were more of them than ever. "Every place you look, you can see one." The sister remarked that you couldn't even have a small meeting anywhere but what some inu would go and report it to the Administration.<sup>1</sup>

On June 8th a similar obsession with the inu was observed in a call on "Y". His wife and a male friend took part in the conversation.

"What I can't understand," said "Y", is what these inu think they are getting out of it. They might end up with three or four thousand dollars, but after the war, nobody will have them." The writer ventured the opinion that it was doubtful if any of the inu were making so much money. "No," said "Y" scornfully, "They're probably doing it just for sixteen dollars a week."

"Y"'s kibe1 friend added, "They have an office now in 701. It's run by a fellow named Popler. He's a good guy but the fellows working for him are inu." The friend stated that "Popler" had asked him to work for him, "but he wouldn't do it for anything. Not with those guys (Opler's assistants) around, anyway."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>K. Hankey, Notes, June 4, 1944, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., June 8, p. 1. The popular confusion of Dr. Opler's workers with inu has caused him much concern.



The same day, "K", who like the two informants quoted above had no connection with any of the pressure groups, said:

"Having inu around keeps everybody on edge. Everybody suspects everybody else and it has led to a great deal of hard feeling. It keeps the people in a constant state of tention."<sup>1</sup>

On June 9, the writer was told by a high ranking member of the Administration, an extremely reliable informant, that Mr. Tateishi, whom evacuees had long suspected of playing the role of informer, was in truth Mr. Best's personal spy. Tateishi had been a member of the Daihyo Sha Kai, and had been regarded with suspicion by the colonists for many months. He had been given employment on the staff of the Newell Star and the writer was told that another Japanese, working on the paper, had joined the staff for the express purpose of keeping an eye on Tateishi. Though only this one case was admitted, it was rumored that several other young men had joined the staff with the same motive of counterespionage. Moreover, Mr. Best had placed Tateishi over an organization which was called the "Research Department." Exactly what the functions of this "research" department were, was never made clear, but every colonist who knew of it, believed that it was an organization of informers. To Dr. Opler's anger and dismay, Tateishi established an office in block seven and placed a sign reading "Research Department" at the door. Since Opler had long been attempting to accomplish his work under the guise of "research" and since their offices were in the same block, Opler's office was placed under great stigma. Dr. Opler protested violently to Mr. Best but considerable time elapsed before Tateishi's sign was taken down.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 8, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., June 9, p. 1, June 15, p. 6.



THE BEATINGS

The first beating of this period which came to the attention of the authorities was that of Hitomi's brother. This occurred around the 12th of May (get exact date). Very little information on why Mr. Hitomi was beaten was obtainable. At first it was rumored that the assailants had mistaken him for his brother Yaozo. Other informants then stated, that perhaps it wasn't a mistake. The clearest explanation of motive came from an informant who stated that Yaozo Hitomi, the manager of the Co-op was in the habit of giving the most desirable positions at his disposal to relatives and friends from Sacramento and that the brother, a recent transferee, was, soon after his arrival, given the position of Manager of the Sewing Machine factory. As has been pointed out frequently one of the transferees' major resentments was that the old Tuleans had and held good positions while they themselves unemployed. This flagrant example of nepotism, in which a new arrival received a good position almost as soon as he entered camp just because he was Hitomi's brother, was deeply resented and may have been the chief reason for the beating.

Few expressions of sympathy for the beaten man were heard. However, "K", who always strove to be fair, made the following remark:

"Hitomi had a brain concussion. He may be left totally blind. His left eye will be blind, I hear. Hitomi is not to be blamed. He came back from a concentration camp just a little while ago. But his brother is manager of the Co-op. And people had a grievance against the manager of the Co-op. Then this fellow who is innocent gets it."<sup>1</sup>

BEATING OF MORIMOTO

The next beating took place a few nights later when Morimoto,

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., June 17, p. 2.