

SURVEY OF PRESS OPINION IN WESTERN STATES ON JAPANESE EVACUATION

WYOMING

Period: March 1 to April 21, 1942

Source: Wyoming State Tribune, Cheyene

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Wyoming State Tribune, Cheyenne, March to April 21, 1942

A. Summary

- I. Press editorial attitude toward Japanese evacuees shows,
  - (a) strong distrust and suspicion; (b) unwillingness to distinguish between "good Jap" and "bad Jap"; (c) no comprehension of occupational or professional skills of evacuee groups; (d) bitterness and antagonism toward Japanese increases and decreases in proportion to reverses or successes in Pacific War Theatre reaching peak about March 19, following release from London of Anthony Eden's Hong Kong atrocity story; (e) Salt Lake regional conference quiets tone of editorial comment; (f) judging by current news treatment of stories, immediate future comment will be based on whether Japanese evacuees can be used to alleviate acute labor shortage in sugar beet areas.
- II. Official State attitude reflected by Governor Nels P. Smith indicates, (a) inclination to follow leadership of Governor Carr of Colorado and block of sugar beet states, (b) insistence that Jap evacuee problem of control, maintenance and supervision is one for the Federal government; (c) acceptance of program laid down by Eisenhower

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and General DeWitt's representatives at Salt Lake City.

State highway patrol, apparently at Governor Smith's orders, instructed to watch transcontinental highway starting March 26 to escort all Japanese crossing State.

III. Private organization attitude seems to center entirely on use of Japanese evacuees to alleviate labor shortage. Wyoming-Montana Beet Growers Association, through President William Gorst, Sheridan, reported to be studying such a plan. Similar action being taken by farm organization at Deaver, according to H. F. Kreuger, president, Deaver irrigation district. Thermopolis Chamber of Commerce wants Japanese to work on new state road through Black Mountain oil fields. Green River discusses proposal to move 5000 Coast evacuated Japanese to a 70,000 acre Skeedskadee land project. All of these proposals have generated in local areas named and presumably have been forwarded to Governor Smith.

B. Survey Analysis

1. Pattern of Press Opinion

By way of background, this State takes exceptional pride in the quality of its patriotism. In World War I, for example,

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Wyoming asserts it had the highest per capita representation in the armed forces of any state.

Present war-mindedness is revealed in the State-Tribune files. Individual pictures and biographies of local men serving with the Army, Navy and Marine Corps appear on the front page two or three times each week. Every Thursday, this newspaper which averages only 10 to 12 pages in bulk daily, devotes an entire three or four page section to pictures and news emanating from an army post near Cheyenne.

War news, received through the Associated Press, dominates the front pages. During the seven weeks' period surveyed, the succession of United Nations reverses in the Pacific War theatre are treated in 72 pt Railroad Gothic block headlines. Dating back to the Japanese "sneak punch" at Pearl Harbor, continuing through defeats suffered in Hong Kong, Malaya, the Philippines, Java and Burma, and up to and including the fall of the Bataan peninsula, the State-Tribune's front pages have doubtless played an important policy in influencing public opinion toward Japanese evacuations from the West Coast. This over-all impression has been heightened by occasional front page "side bar" stories, accounts of local men who have been killed or captured in the war zone.

As in the case of most inter-mountain states, there are indications through the press files that editors and reporters in Wyoming have only superficial conception of the make-up and

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and character of the West Coast Japanese, either alien-born or American citizens. Careful study shows that nowhere in the State-Tribune files has there appeared any acknowledgment that a large percentage of the evacuees possess exceptional professional abilities, that a number are skilled mechanics, and that, perhaps, the largest group of all have an outstanding record as farm owners, managers or laborers.

In pointing to this lack of knowledge, it is well to note that the 1940 census gives Wyoming a Japanese population of 643. Of this number 253 were born in Japan and 390 are American born.

Following an AP date-lined story from San Francisco on March 3 that the U. S. Army will move aliens from the West Coast "as it likes", and a follow-up story the next day revealing military zones established by order of Lieut. Gen. De Witt. The State-Tribune on March 5 commented editorially, under the heading "The Enemy Within":

"Every congressman from beyond Salt Lake City is buried under an avalanche of mail protesting that the government is entirely too scrupulous in respecting privileges of citizens of Japanese ancestry."

Continuing, the same editorial said that "even the Nisei, or Japanese Americans are under suspicion. We can't tell a good Jap from a bad one."

On the same date, Governor Nels Smith, of Wyoming, was asked by Governor Carr, Colorado, to join with him and

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Governor Griswold, of Nebraska, in working out a formula for joint action on the problem of Japanese evacuations from the Coast.

That sentiment in Wyoming, already flaming with distrust and suspicion of all Japanese, found a new sore point, was shown by an editorial in the State-Tribune on March 6, headed "That Japanese Matter."

It pointed out that Wyoming is ready to do its part in World War II by:

".... it is utterly unequitable and unfair to subject Wyoming to bureaucratic dictum that it shall support and find employment for Japanese brought here from Pacific Coast defense zones ...."

Two factors seemed to have contributed to another upward surge in indignation throughout the State. The first is the appearance in the State of a few West Coast Japanese, bearing army travel permits. An AP dispatch from Gering, Nebraska, appearing March 1, and given front page prominence, relates that "two automobiles loaded with Coast Japs arrived in Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska, apparently to work as farm labor". The second is a box-car headlined story from the AP bureau, London, quoting Foreign Minister Anthony Eden at considerable length on alleged atrocities suffered at the hands of Japanese soldiers by white men and women, military and civilians, captured at Hong Kong.

On March 13, the newspaper commented editorially under the heading - "Intern the Japanese".

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Pointing out that many Americans were captured at Guam, Wake Island, and the Philippines, China, and Java, the editorial continued:

".... we have none. Therefore ... everyone of these Japanese aliens and American-born Japanese .... should be rounded up forthwith and imprisoned in detention camps."

Foreshadowing the regional conference subsequently called in Salt Lake City and perhaps indicating that Governor Smith's liaison with General DeWitt, the War Department as well as governors of adjacent states had gone far to alleviate some of Wyoming's editorial fears. The final comment by the State-Tribune occurs on March 19, in an editorial headed "On Protective Custody":

"Alien Japanese in the United States are finding protective custody is a '..... decent and orderly fair dealing'. But it should not be mistaken for softness and laxity."

There are no editorials appearing during the month of April, save for comment appearing in Raymond Tucker's syndicated Washington Column on the 15th. Tucker asserts that Montanans have protested over the "coddling" of Japanese internees who "live the life of Riley" at the Missoula, Montana, concentration camp.

That State-Tribune editors attached growing importance to proposals to use Japanese evacuees as labor in the sugar beet

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areas, is shown by the development of individual stories. The short AP item datelined Gering, Nebraska, on March 11, indicates that beet interests may have offered job opportunities to West Coast Jap farm laborers at a considerably earlier period. Five subsequent stories, all dealing with this development (see III. 3.) are buried on inside pages but on March 26, the State-Tribune headlines on its important back page (which is actually a second front page) an AP story out of Sheridan, which relates to studies being made by the Wyoming-Montana Beet Growers Association for bringing Japanese evacuee labor into the beet fields.

II. Attitudes of Official Wyoming Political Groups.

1. The State

From March 1 to April 21 all statements issued by Governor Nels Smith's office show a pattern of consistency. In A Page One article in the State-Tribune on March 3, Smith is quoted as saying Wyoming will accept Japanese aliens evacuated from the West Coast "only if they are under United States guard". This statement is made in a letter to Representative John H. Tolan,

Following the personal request of Governor Carr of Colorado to Governor Smith, as well as to Governor Griswold of Nebraska, to join Colorado in accepting Japanese evacuees, the State executive, several times in the ensuing weeks, reiterates his stand that the control, supervision and maintenance of the evacuees is a problem for the federal government. This, for example, is emphasized in the governor's answer to a resolution from the Deaver, Wyoming, irrigation district which, in effect,

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asks the federal government to send in "all the Japs they want to". (State-Tribune, March 15, Pg. 2).

Probably anticipating any possible request for diversion of state tax funds, on March 2, the Wyoming Public Welfare Department is asked to share the responsibility for finding employment for the evacuees. This article is apparently based upon a letter from Governor Smith to State Welfare Director S. S. Hoover. On March 19, however, Director Hoover is quoted as saying the State has no funds to care for Japanese evacuees,

Although snow storms blocked roads and highways for the preceding seven day period, Governor Smith, on March 26, instructed the Wyoming State Highway patrol to watch and escort all Japanese caravans crossing the state on the east-west lateral, Highway 30.

2. Police --- State, County and Local.

No disorders involving Japanese - either Wyoming residents or evacuees bearing military travel permits - are reported in the State-Tribune during the seven-week period. It is entirely probable that adverse weather shifted Japanese caravans to the Arizona-New Mexico route. That state officials were closely watching any migrants entering Wyoming is shown by a dispatch in the April 1 issue to the effect that three West Coast Japanese families "numbering about 20 persons" arrived in Meriden and Kemerer, according to advices received by S. S. Hoover, State Welfare Director, through the local sheriff's office.

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On April 3, there is an item from Laramie that a group of evacuees passing through that city were reported to have destroyed an anti-Japanese poster on a gasoline filling station. There is no indication whether this poster was one of a number distributed by an oil company, or whether it was installed by an independent filling station operator. Apparently no attempt was made on the part of either the Laramie police or the State highway patrol to question the Japanese over this incident since it was reported by the filling station operator after the evacuees had left the city, presumably for one of the beet sugar centers.

III. Attitudes of Private Organizations.

If so-called "indignation meetings" or public debates occurred in Wyoming during this period, they are not mentioned in the State-Tribune. Emphasis, however, is given to several stories dealing with the serious shortage of labor in the sugar beet fields and proposals for using Japanese evacuee labor.

On March 15, an AP dispatch from Deaver mentions a resolution prepared by the Deaver Irrigation District, through President H. P. Kreuger, and directed to authorities in Washington and to Governor Smith. The resolution urges sending Japanese to an abandoned CCC camp near Deaver. Mr. Kreuger presumably spoke for his community at large when he wrote: "Why should we fear the Japs? If we can't handle them when they are unarmed, how do we expect our sons to handle them armed?"

As indicated, he was answered by Governor Smith who reiterated that the entire problem of Japanese evacuation,

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control, maintenance and supervision was a federal one.

The controversy over the use of Japanese evacuees for labor bobs up again on March 26. A dispatch from Sheridan, relates that three plans were being studied for moving Japanese into Wyoming, according to President William Gorst, William Gorst of the Wyoming-Montana Beet Growers Association. Mr. Gorst is quoted as saying (a) "the Japs would be brought here to work all summer under guard; (b) only the "good ones" would be brought in and scattered throughout our communities unguarded; (c) the Federal government would provide Japanese evacuee subsistence farms throughout the Rocky mountain area.

A new development occurs on April 3, when a dispatch from Thermopolis asserts the Chamber of Commerce of that city wanting alien Japanese labor to work on a new state road from Ten Sleep to Thermopolis via the Black Mountain oil fields. And again, on April 5, a dispatch from Green River, relates a proposal is being considered in that area to move 5000 Coast evacuated Japanese to a 70,000 acre Seedskadee land project.

C. Listing of Press Clippings

Mar. 3 P.1 Wyoming will take Japanese aliens evacuated from West Coast only if under US guard, says Governor Nels Smith in a letter to Representative John H. Tolan.

San Francisco datelined AP dispatch says US army will move aliens from West Coast "as it likes".

Mar. 4 P.1 SP (AP) Military zones established on West Coast by order of Lieutenant General DeWitt.

P.3 Denver (AP) Governor Carr, Colorado, says he will personally ask Governor Smith of Wyoming, and

C. Listing of Press Clippings, Cont.

Governor Griswold of Nebraska to join Colorado in accepting Jap aliens evacuated from Coast.

- Mar. 5 P.4 EDITORIAL: "The Enemy Within." Quotes "Every congressman from beyond Salt Lake City is buried under an avalanche of mail protesting that the government is entirely too scrupulous in respecting the privilege of citizens of Japanese ancestry." Edit. continues, that even "Nisei, or Japanese-Americans" are subject to suspicion.
- P.4 LOS ANGELES (AP) Dist. Atty. Dockweiler says Japs have lease on land near vital strategic points in Southern California.
- Mar. 6 P.2 Wyoming's Public Welfare Department is asked to share responsibility for finding employment for Coast's evacuated Japanese.
- P.2 SANTA FE (AP) Proposal for colonization of 40,000 to 60,000 American-born Japanese in N.M. presented by L. E. Detweiler of New York, an "unofficial liaison agent" between the Federal government and a group of wealthy California Japanese. Japs said to have \$20,000,000 available for land purchase, to be matched by similar amount from Federal government.
- P.7 S.F. (AP) Army keeping secret its plans for removal of Japanese, Fourth Army Command quoted:
- Mar. 8 P.4 EDITORIAL: "That Japanese Matter." State of Wyoming is ready to do its part in World War II but "... it is utterly unequitable and unfair to subject Wyoming to bureaucratic dictum that it shall support and find employment for Japanese brought here from Pacific Coast defense zones..."
- Mar. 10 P.1 S.F. (AP) 200 Nisei from 10 Western states pledge loyalty to US at three-day meeting of Japanese-American Citizens' League.
- Mar. 11 P.1 Gering, Neb. (AP) Two automobiles loaded with Coast Japs, carrying travel permits, arrive in Scotts Bluff County, apparently to work as farm labor.
- Mar. 13 P.4 EDITORIAL: "Intern the Japanese." Nipponese armies hold many American war prisoners captured at Guam, Wake Island, Philippines, Java, China, We have none. Therefore "... everyone of these

C. Listing of Press Clippings - Cont.

Japanese aliens and American-born Japanese ... should be rounded up forthwith and imprisoned in detention camps."

- Mar. 15 P.2 Governor Smith re-states his views that Japanese moved to Wyoming must be under strict Federal control, supervision and maintenance. Smith answers H. F. Kreuger, President, Deaver, Wyoming, irrigation district, who by resolution, urges Federal government to send in all the Japs "they want to".
- P. 2 DEAVER, Wyo., (AP) Deaver irrigation district, by resolution, urges sending Japs to vacated nearby CCC camps. Kreuger says "why should we fear Japs. If we can't handle them unarmed, how do we expect our sons to handle them armed?"
- Mar. 19 P.2 State has no funds to care/Jap aliens. According to 1940 census of Wyoming, State had 643 Japs --- 253 born in Japan, 390 in the United States.
- P. 4 EDITORIAL: "On Protective Custody." Alien Japanese in the United States are finding protective custody in a ".... decent and orderly fair dealing". "But it should not be mistaken for softness or laxity."
- Mar. 20 P. 2 SF (AP) Mass evacuation of West Coast Japs announced by General DeWitt.
- Mar. 26 P. 1 Wyoming state highway patrol instructed to watch and escort all Japanese caravans crossing state, particularly east-west High.30.
- P. 12 SHERIDAN: (AP) Three plans studied for moving Japs into Wyoming, says William Gorst, president Wyoming-Montana Beet Growers Association. (a) - Japs would be brought here to work under guard all summer; (b) only "good ones" would be brought in and scattered throughout communities unguarded; (c) Federal Govt. would provide subsistence farms in Rocky mountain area.
- Mar.27 P. 1 War Department advises Governor Smith that no plans have been made yet to evacuate Japs to Wyoming -- "nor any such plans contemplated at the present". Information contained in letter from Maj. Gen. A. W. Cullion, Provost Marshall.
- Apr. 1 P. 2 Three West Coast Jap families, "numbering about 20 persons" arrive to settle in Meriden and Kemerer, according to S. S. Hoover, State Welfare Director.

C. Listing of Press Clippings - Cont.

- P. 12 SF (AP) Three thousand Japanese ordered to leave Los Angeles Harbor area.
- Apr. 3 P. 8 State officials to attend Salt Lake Regional meeting on evacuation and to meet M. S. Eisenhower, director WRA.
- P. 10 THERMOPOLIS (AP) Civic organizations want alien Jap labor to work on new state road from Ten Sleep to Thermopolis via Black Mountain oil fields.
- P. 12 LARAMIE - Group of Japanese evacuees reported to have destroyed anti-Jap poster on gasoline filling station.
- Apr. 8 P. 1 SALT LAKE (AP) Regional parley opens on Jap evacuation problems.
- Apr. 9 P. 7 Governor Smith pledges personal aid on Jap evacuation problem.
- Apr. 5 P. 10 GREEN RIVER (AP) Proposal considered to move 5000 Japs to 70,000 acre Seedskadee land project.
- Apr. 7 Governor Smith says he insists upon Federal control of relocated Jap evacuees.
- Apr. 15 P. 4 EDITORIAL: (Tucker's Washington column) Montanans are protesting coddling of Jap internees who "live life of Riley" at Missoula concentration camp.