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Chap. III

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A Threatened Dissolution of Information Office

At a social conference with Block Leaders and The Head of the Family Relations Service, the Assistant Project Director suggested that as soon as each Block Leader could be assigned an apartment for an office, the Information Service could be absorbed by the Block Leaders. It was the desire of WRA regional headquarters to have Block Leaders cover the affairs of the blocks as much as possible. He advised, subject to the Project Director's approval, that Block Leaders incorporate into their services the duties up till then carried by the Information Service.

If and when such a transfer of function took place, an arrangement could be made whereby every six Block Leaders would report to a Ward Leader, who in turn would report to the Project Director at a daily conference to be conducted by the Director and his division heads. The general idea was that the six Ward Leaders would constitute a sort of city council to supervise the management of the Center in conjunction with the appointed personnel officers.

If the Assistant Project Director's suggestions were carried out, there would thenceforward be only one channel open to the residents through which they could contact the Project Director's office. This channel would be

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from resident to Block Leaders to Ward Leader to Administration. In other words, the suggested plan would mean the elimination of the Information Service.

Although the Assistant Project Director advanced the idea of the absorption of the Information Service only for discussion, the Block Leaders welcomed it so eagerly, that in the words of the apprehensive Information Service which saw its existence about to vanish "the Block Leaders gave the impression as if they are already assuming that this suggestion is to be adopted and put into practice." (Information Office No. 1, Report June 7, 1942)

The Head of the Information Center then submitted a long memo to the Director of the Service Division voicing his objections and opinions in regard to the proposed change. As his first point, he mentioned the fact that the Information Service had been and was continuing to be a vital point of contact between the residents and the Administration. The services of the Information Center, according to previous understanding, were to run parallel to those of the Block Leaders, neither being subordinate to the other. That it had been able to render effective service was evidenced by the fact that it had been able to present the residents' opinions and complaints to the Administration and give an administrative answer to them the following day. The continual patronage of the residents attested to the efficiency of the Information Service.

Its staff had from the start been completely disassociated from politics. The Information Office had been able to present the views and observations on life in the Center impartially and without ulterior motive and the Administration had been the gainer from this. The Block Leaders' position, on the other hand, would be a political appointment, subject to the ups and downs of political influences. At the end of six months, Block Leaders would have

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to be re-elected or replaced. The presentation of a Block Leader's views on Center life would be bound to be influenced by political biases calculated to promote a Leader's own interests. Furthermore, residents who were dissatisfied with the Block Leader's performance of his duties could not very well present their objection to the Administration; for if the Information Office went out of existence, there would be no direct channel between the residents and the Administration. Block Leaders could scarcely be expected to report complaints concerning themselves. Therefore it would be contrary to the welfare of the residents as well as to the Project Director's office to set up a situation in which the Block Leaders would act as a medium between the two.

Neither would it serve the interests of the evacuees or the Administration to put the Information Service into the office of the Block Leaders. Conscientious and honest reports might suffer detention by some "super-politically-minded leaders," even though the majority of the Block Leaders were honest. The best arrangement would be for the Information Service and the Block Leaders' Offices to work in conjunction with one another, cooperating but never overruling one another.

Neither would the best interests of the Center be served by appointing the Block Leader as manager of the Information Office in his block. This would entail more expense, since the Block Leader could not carry out the duties of both the Block Leader's Office and the Information Center. He would have to hire a clerk, a typist, and possibly also a few messengers to coordinate his office with the offices of other Block Leaders and perhaps, also, with the office of Ward Leaders. This would add up to 72 additional employees for the 36 blocks, besides the 36 Block Leaders themselves. On the other hand, under the existing set-up, the Information Office was being staffed by 56 people, including 23 clerks, 10 typists, 22 messengers, and one organizer of the VSC.

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Information clerks had to be capable, resourceful and reliable persons. To mobilize 36 men, having the personality traits requested for a leader, would be to make serious inroads into existing manpower resources and to decrease the number available for the industrial projects to be opened soon.

The co-managers of the Information Service were ex-newspaper editors, experienced in observing and reporting human behavior. Their clerks were men who have been trained through two months and a half of difficult and trying experiences. They had served in a period when large daily arrivals of the newcomers necessitated a quick initiating into their strange new mode of living in a way to assure satisfaction along with speed. The required number of leaders could scarcely be mustered who had background that would prepare them to render such effective service to the residents.

Neither could the Ward Leaders be expected to be men capable of making out daily reports that were well and intelligently edited. The Ward Leaders would be required to maintain a staff of six or eight clerks who would carry on the work of printing, translating, and distributing bulletins and notices that were being issued daily by the Administration.

Such large additions to the staff would mean a considerably increased cost in money and in the burden of coordination.

B Proposed Alternative Plans to Maintain the Status Quo

If the existing dual set-up of Information Service and Block Leaders' Offices could not be maintained, then either of two alternate proposals might be considered. These were submitted by the Head of the Information Service for consideration.

Each block office might be provided with a Block Leader, an Information Clerk from the Information Service, and a social worker from the Family Relations Service. The Block Leader could assume the duties of the night checker, thus maintaining daily and direct contact with each resident in

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An alternative plan would be for each block office to be assigned a social worker whose duties would be to assist with clerical work and to help the Block Leader on social problems. Each Ward Leaders' office would be assigned two Information clerks and one typist, the same set-up as existed in the Information Service field offices. At the Ward Leaders' Office, also, would be stationed the Information Center with its several clerks and its co-supervisors. The Information Office would edit the daily reports collected by the clerks from the six Block Leaders (to a ward) and would transmit them through the co-supervisors to the Chief of Publication Section. The Ward Leaders, in their daily conferences with the Project Director, would take up the more important and serious problems and would leave the minor ones and special ones to the Information Center.

By either plan, the end would be accomplished of maintaining two separate channels between the residents and the Administration, without any quarrel or confusion, and with efficiency and justice to everybody.

C Struggle for Survival

During the next ten days, the Head of the Information Service made repeated attempts to maintain the right of the service to survive.

June 17

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D The Rise of the Block Leaders' Office

(June 22) In a conference between the Assistant Project Director and five representatives of the Block Leaders, a plan was accepted that provided each Block Leader with two assistants, one an information clerk, and the other a night checker. This meant an assignment of 72 assistants to the 36 Block Leaders.

In addition, the plan called for a central executive council's office which would act as a clearing house for the daily reports from the 36 Block Leaders. This required the services of at least one clerk and two typists. Furthermore, the Chief of the Publications Office would organize a staff of several men to edit and compile these daily reports. It was suggested that the two supervisors of the Information Service be transferred, along with three typists, to the office of the Chief of Publications.

1 Transfer of Personnel June 22 Rep No 74

The managers of the expiring Information Service designated places in the Block Leaders Offices for its information clerks and assigned its two co-supervisors to the office of the Chief of Publications. Also, it honored a request from the FREE PRESS and received resignations from five of its messengers. Other messengers and some typists, including the clerk at the Lost and Found Department, were to be assigned to work elsewhere in the Center.

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(June 23) The next day, a representative of the five-man committee of the Block Leaders met with the retiring head of the Information Service and requested help in finding and training eight additional capable men to supplement the retiring staff members of the Information Office who would fill places in the Block Leaders' offices. It was not known if all the retiring Information Center staff members would be willing to transfer to the block offices or not. Some might want to go to the coordinating offices instead.

For the office of the Executive Council, the Assistant Project Director ruled the following assignments: one clerk with executive ability, one stenographer, two typists, and six messengers. In all probability, most of these offices would be filled from personnel leaving the Information Service.

(June 26, 1942) Three days later, the Information Service was still functioning; but rumors of its imminent extinction had spread around the Center. As no official announcement had been made in regard to the proposed change, the rumors threatened to become wild and damaging. The Information Office itself met the situation by explaining that the change was for the welfare of all the people and that it would bring about improvement for all.

During the "waiting period," and until the transfer became effective, staff members who were worried over the uncertainty of their jobs were hard to restrain. Some resigned to find work elsewhere in the Center; others were persuaded to remain. But as the date set for the termination of the Information Service kept being advanced, its very indefiniteness only brought more confusion and worry. By June 26, those workers on the Information Office staff called for a definite decision as to whether they would be retained or not. They then learned that six were to be assigned to the Executive Council. Others not assigned to jobs had their attention called

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On July, the announcement was made by the manager of the Information Service that the Information Offices would close by the week-end and that the clerks would be given a vacation except for those who were to go to the block offices that were ready to receive them. The manager was to become Executive Secretary for the Block Leader's Council.

II SETTING UP THE BLOCK LEADER SYSTEM

A The Temporary Community Council

Washington's ruling for a Temporary Community Council was sent by Milton S. Eisenhower, Director of WRA in Washington, to the Regional Director and to all Project Directors in a memo, dated June 5, 1942, which provided for setting up a temporary system in each Relocation Center of a self-government unit which would have advisory authority only. The expectation was that this preliminary council would provide an opportunity for exploring the evacuees' aptitudes in the exercise of governing power. Also, it would be of educational value to them in how to organize and process a self-government system and it would serve as an experimental laboratory out of which definitive regulations could be formulated for a more permanent set-up later.

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1 Duties The block representatives were to cooperate with the project staff by encouraging block residents to participate in community functions. They were to apply administrative regulations and policies to the residents and to report to the Project Director and his staff on how the community services were functioning. Also, they were to perform other duties designated from time to time.

2 Directions as to Procedure Washington also supplied instructions for the Project Director to hold elections for such blocks as were already qualified and ready to elect their block representatives. (A block was ready when it had received substantially its full quota of inhabitants.) Notices were to be posted at least five days before each election. Procedures for conducting the election were given in detail.

The Temporary Community Council was directed to hold an organization meeting as soon as a majority of the block representatives were elected. This meeting was to hold elections for a presiding chairman and secretary, and to draw up such by-laws as might be deemed necessary for further proceedings. These by-laws were to be specifically directed to the matter of holding meetings at stated intervals not less than once a week and to keep all minutes of all action taken at all meetings.

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B Elections Continue

In June, the selection of leaders for the new blocks continued and the Administration's choice from among recent nominees was announced on June 11.

At the conference on selection, a spirit of complete cooperation prevailed among the nominees. In many instances, men who had led in votes--wishing to continue other work in the community--declined appointment in favor of rival candidates. In certain instances, largely because of language difficulties, nominees asked to be permitted to serve as alternates rather than as leaders, as they feared that a language handicap might not permit them to represent all groups adequately.

By mid-June, the camp population was almost within its maximum capacity, with some 30 blocks of barracks supplying their quota of leaders for the Block Leaders' Council. There was no longer any need to delay organizing the council or initiating it into action on a group basis. Block Leaders, as individual managers of their blocks, had had up to three months' experience negotiating the affairs of their blocks and aiding the residents. Now, they were about to consider problems pertaining to the welfare of the Center as a whole. They were to become the nucleus for a community government program which, in conjunction with administrative guidance, would steer the destiny of Manzanar.

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C The First Block Leaders' Council Meeting

At the first formal meeting of the Block Leaders' Council the Project Director (Mr. C.) was present to represent the Project Director (Mr. Nash). In a leading speech, the administrative officer pointed out the aims of the project as a whole and discussed in particular the problems and significance of the contributions which the Block Leaders could make to a successful self-government program. After outlining the responsibilities of Block Leaders, he pledged the Administration's full support and cooperation to a good self-government. He followed this pledge with a request for willingness on the part of the Block Leaders to accept the responsibility assigned to them. The suggestion of acceptance was put to a motion, and the motion was carried unanimously by the Block Leaders.

It was then agreed, after some discussion, that the Administration should retain its power of veto to appoint Block Leaders and to replace unsuitable ones.

Block Leaders were to be placed on a full-time work basis, as of June 15. Previous appointees who had been serving in a temporary capacity would be placed on the payroll as of the same date. The actual rate of pay for the position of Block Leader was still an uncertain matter.

D Duties of Block Leaders

At this first meeting of the Block Leaders' Council, the Assistant Project Director outlined the specific duties of the Block Leader. Each Block Leader was to be prepared for the following obligations: to assume all responsibility for the welfare of all the people in the block; to keep records that would properly account for Administration properties; to assume responsibility for distributing official information; to hear all complaints and assume responsibility for investigating them; to assume responsibility for all janitor work in the block; to clear through the block office all

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In another connection, the duties of the night checkers appointed to the block offices were outlined as follows: taking inventory; disposing of government property and recording such disposals; making a nightly population count of the whole Center (this an army requirement); relaying important information; and in general, doing the work previously performed by the Block Leaders; namely, checking up on the well-being of the people in each block.

E New Business

"New business" that came up for discussion at the initial meeting of the Block Leaders' Council covered such topics as taking census of all the able-bodied men in each block who could be encouraged to work and assist in production; investigating and making prompt report on the irregularities in the stamped food cards which were being used in the mess halls; discussing the matter of changing employment, cooperating with the Occupation Officer who was soon to arrive in making a proper occupational analysis (so that individuals could be matched to jobs), and making plans for the election of Block Leaders

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for five new blocks, for which authority had already been granted to hold elections. The date was set for Friday, June 19. The temporary Block Leaders already serving in the blocks were to preside at the election meetings.

At the council meeting, the Block Leaders were also asked to consider suitable persons in their blocks who might be asked to serve on the eight committees which had been provided for and to submit their choices to the chairman of the Block Leaders' Council. It was essential and desirable that the best minds in Manzanar should be made available in this selective cross sectioning of the population.

A memorandum was prepared for the attention of the Project Director asking that the block elections for the new leaders be held as soon as possible and asking that the then Block Leaders form an election committee to organize and conduct the elections.

Then the point was made "that in following the spirit of self-rule, the elections be democratically conducted and the persons receiving the largest vote be named Block Leaders without selection by the management."

An answer was requested.

That this initial petition in the direction of a more democratic representation was granted is apparent from the entry in the Project Report, No. 9, dated June 19, 1942:

NEW BLOCK LEADERS' ELECTION SYSTEM SET UP

"To enable residents of Manzanar, two-thirds of whom are American citizens, to elect their representatives on a democratic basis, a new procedure for Block Leaders' nominations and elections has been announced.

Eligible to vote will be adult persons, 21 years of age or over.

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Nominations on five new blocks are due to be held Monday. Prior to election by secret ballot, nominees' names will be posted for several days."

F The Last Election in June

On June 17, a special election board of six men proceeded to organize and conduct elections for leaders from five blocks which were not yet represented on the Block Leaders' Council. These elections were conducted formally by an election board, with voting recorded on special ballots which were deposited in sealed boxes. The members of the election board acted as temporary chairmen at the respective block meetings, where they outlined and explained the duties of the Block Leaders, the duties of the residents, and the process of election.

Block residents, men and women 21 years of age and older, made up the electorate. Night checkers had listed all eligible voters within each block.

The nominees were selected in the June 19 primaries for these five blocks; the elections were held three days later on June 22. An election board counted the secret ballots and the office of Block Leader was awarded to the candidate drawing the highest vote. The candidate receiving the second highest vote was named as alternate Block Leader.

Returns were announced in the June 23rd issue of the FREE PRESS. This issue also carried the Block Leaders' announcement that all council meetings would be open to the public.

G The Second Block Leaders Council Meeting

At the Block Leaders' meeting on June 19, the suggestion was made that the Block Leaders choose an Executive Committee of six or seven members. No action was taken at the time, but on the following day the chairman of the Block Leaders' Council sent a letter to the Assistant Project Director outlining his arguments in support of a system of ward leaders as set down on pages one to four of the Constitution which was sent with the letter.

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Block residents, men and women 21 years of age and older, made up the electorate. Night checkers had listed all eligible voters within each block.

The nominees were selected in the June 19 primaries for these five blocks; the elections were held three days later on June 22. An election board counted the secret ballots and the office of Block Leader was awarded to the candidate drawing the highest vote. The candidate receiving the second highest vote was named as alternate Block Leader.

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The chairman's chief contention was that, apart from its office function, an Executive Committee composed of Ward Leaders would serve the Administration as a ready avenue of communication to the Block Leaders. When announcements or news had to be disseminated rapidly, it would be much more effective for the Project Director to meet with the Ward Leaders and through them to relay his message to all Block Leaders than to try to assemble all the Block Leaders themselves.

The chairman went on to present the proposition previously submitted by the Information Center that a Ward Leader's office could be staffed by a ward leader, two information clerks, a secretary and her helper, and a social worker. Furthermore, such a set-up would not disturb the work of the Information Service which was still much needed by the residents of Manzanar, and it would save the Administration money in that it would conserve more manpower than if each Block Leader's office were to be staffed by an Information Clerk and a secretary in addition to the Block Leader.

III THE SELF-GOVERNMENT SYSTEM TAKES SHAPE

A The Block Leaders Office Becomes Dignified

Prior to the formal setting up of the system of a Block Leaders' Council, the position of Block Leader had not been held in much regard. Voting for the early appointees had on the whole been listless and small. Because they were appointees and not electees, office-holders had lost prestige in the community. These leaders were virtually the Administration's and not the people's choice, and in the outspoken scorn of the residents, they were mere "stooges," "lap dogs," "messenger boys for the Administration," and so on. Such bickering, back-biting, sniping, and griping made for a generally unwholesome atmosphere.

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Now at last, out of the welter of uncertainty, doubt, and confusion of the preceding two months, there was emerging a satisfying organization which had purpose, and responsibility, and a sense of direction.

B Delay in Constitution Causes Restlessness

By mid-June, the personnel make-up of the Block Leaders Council was largely determined but Manzanar's residents were becoming restless over the delay in drawing up the promised Constitution. People were raising the question as to whether they might not have a say in its formulation; at least in its acceptance.

After the Constitution would be adopted by the current Block Leader, for instance, would they, the people, be able to go around campaigning for the election of the leaders subsequently to be elected? The answer was yes. But the Constitution had to be drawn up and accepted before a permanent council could be set up.

At a Block Leaders' Council meeting, on June 23, 1942, it was agreed that a new draft of the Constitution would have to be prepared because of changes which had been made in regard to the Block Leaders and the Executive Committee. The constitution committee which had drawn up the previous form of the Constitution was re-appointed. This committee was asked to present its revised form to the people through the FREE PRESS.

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1 The Executive Committee

At the Block Leaders' Council meeting, June 26, the question was raised as to how representation was to be secured for the Executive Committee that is, whether selections would be made from the council or from members at large, or from each six blocks.

After discussion and the rejection of several amendments to motions that were offered, a decision was reached to have an Executive Committee that would be made up of six members, these to be elected from the Block Leaders at large, with a chairman to be voted upon by the body as a whole. The term of office of Executive Committee members was to be six months.

This group of six was to meet with the Administration whenever emergency required, and was to relay information to the general membership of the Block Leaders' Council. When matters of important policy were to be considered the entire Block Leaders' Council would be called into conference.

Tentative duties of the Executive Council were to be the dissemination of information, the distribution of supplies, night checking, and a general all-over supervision of the blocks.

2 Personnel on Executive Committee

The membership of the new Executive Committee, who would represent the Block Leaders in their contact with the Administration was well chosen. The chairman was a graduate of Stanford, a former Los Angeles executive secretary of the Wholesale Japanese Produce Commission Merchants' Association, and a man who had been active in Japanese community affairs. The five supporting members were a former assistant English editor of a Japanese-California daily news sheet, who had been active in political organization work; a business man who at one time had been in the exporting business and who had also been active in the Maryknoll Mission; a partner-operator of I and I Produce at a wholesale market and an ex-floor manager; an owner-operator of commission

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The first meeting of the Executive Committee was held on June 29, 1945. Topics for consideration included kitchen schedules, staff meetings, and the personnel to be set up in the Central Office and in the Block Leaders' Offices.

C The Question of Citizenship vs Non-citizenship

1 Ruling

On June 1, an important item in the self-government report issued by the Project Director in Washington was read at a meeting of the committee on Constitution; namely, that only citizens might be block representatives. Although this was very important, it was decided to ignore it for the time being, and to draw up a Constitution which did not incorporate the stipulation of citizenship. If the Constitution were made flexible, with provision for amendments, clauses could be entered to cover the stipulation in the event that the citizenship requirement could not be withdrawn.

2 Eligibility

On June 26 the Block Leaders Council brought up for discussion the matter of eligibility for the office of Block Leader. The Assistant Project Director felt confident that an amendment would be made in regard to Washington's ruling that only citizens could be block representatives. The Administrative officer assured the Block Leaders Council that it should be proud of the fact that the plan for self-government, then being developed at Manzanar, was tallying so closely with the plan suggested in Washington, except for this one requirement.

If Director Eisenhower's ruling was to be maintained, over half of Manzanar's acting Block Leaders, including their chairman, would have to be replaced by citizens.

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On a very practical level, one of the Block Leaders, himself a citizen, declared that the Council should submit reasons against such a ruling.

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Closely allied to the question of citizenship was the matter of using English language since English was suggested as the medium in which meetings were to be conducted whenever possible. A translation was permitted when the English was not clearly understood. Similarly, if Japanese was used, it also should be translated into English.

D Ward Leaders

The matter of Ward Leader was re-opened for discussion, but the suggestion was not proving popular with the Block Leaders' Council.

Most of the Block Leaders clung to their original desire for an Executive Committee which would be made up of representative Block Leaders who would meet with the Administration and report its policies to the Block Leaders. Since this committee would be responsible to the Block Leaders' Council, a member could be removed from it by majority vote. The term of office of an Executive Committee member would be the same as that of a Block Leader.

E Summary

The self-government unit of Manzanar began with ten Block Leaders, chosen by the Administration from candidates nominated by the residents.

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The procedure outlined for future elections was that a meeting of the residents was to be called by the election board to nominate candidates.

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Candidates had to be over 21 years of age, and loyal in spirit and deed to the United States Government.

The Block Leaders' Council met at least once a week, usually on Friday morning, to discuss the general welfare of the Relocation Center. Also they were frequently called into conference to discuss and advise with the Administration the application of policies. An Executive Committee of six members was recommended to confer and to advise with the Administration.

A constitution committee of Block Leaders drafted a Constitution for self-government in accordance with Administration policies and established practices at Manzanar.

The duties of the Block Leaders were defined and included a readiness to assume responsibility for the welfare of all the people in the leader's block. Also included were responsibilities for record keeping, property protection, information dissemination, hearing complaints, supervising janitor work, garbage collection, visitors, mail delivery, and distribution of supplies. In addition, the Block Leaders were to be responsible for setting up procedures to replace themselves.

Important qualities recognized as desirable for Block Leaders included an acknowledged respect by the block residents so that the leader would be in a position to influence his constituents; a readiness on the part of the leader to show a whole-hearted cooperation with the Administration and its point of view and wishes.

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(July 1) The constitution committee met to redraft the Constitution. Certain changes had been decided upon in regard to the procedure for electing members of the Executive Committee; and at the same time, much concern was felt over the Administrative procedure which stipulated that only citizens were eligible to be block representatives. In the process of revision, the committee decided to follow the form used in the previous Constitution but to incorporate the suggestions sent from the Director's office in Washington.

Two men were appointed to draw up a rough plan for a Constitution. This small "sub-committee" introduced changes in the preamble and in the set-up of the Executive Committee and, on the following morning, presented their product not altogether completed to the large committee.

The larger seven-man constitution committee accepted the document as presented and indicated their intention to submit it to the Block Leaders' Council.

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Two men were appointed to draw up a rough plan for a Constitution. This small "sub-committee" introduced changes in the preamble and in the set-up of the Executive Committee and, on the following morning, presented their product not altogether completed to the large committee.

The larger seven-man constitution committee accepted the document as presented and indicated their intention to submit it to the Block Leaders' Council.

Administrative instructions by urging all citizens to participate in the camouflage net project; traffic rules within the Center; certain health regulations; community beautification activities; and prevention of fire hazards within the Center.

Block Leaders were expected to open their offices in June, after which they would be in a better position to carry out their new functions.

Self-government under Administrative guidance developed satisfactorily and smoothly. In its early stages, it was considered to be of definite value to the Administration and the residents and to be contributing to a wholesome effect within the community. It was expected that the self-government set-up would expedite and aid the work of the Administration as well as to promote the general welfare of all the people.

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V MAJOR GRIEVANCES

A Fundamental Needs

In the spring of their arrival in the desert, the evacuees were more concerned about their physical adjustment to conditions within the Center than they were to governmental forms. Arriving early in the dust-storm season, housed in army barracks that featured cracks and holes in walls and floors and were equipped only with beds and blankets, crowded together with people who often were uncongenial and irritating, fed on diets that were foreign to many older people who had always lived on Japanese food, deprived of their normal sugar intake (for their coming tallied with the national rationing of that commodity,) unable to buy clothing or to foresee other ways of acquiring any, asked to do work that was beneath the dignity of the educated younger people, the evacuees young and old, were deeply mired in grievances that arose from elemental needs connected with food, clothing, shelter, and work.

1 Furniture When they had first come to Manzanar, the WCCA had promised them that tables and stools of uniform size would be assigned to every apartment. By mid-June, however, no such furniture was in evidence, nor could the Administration say just when it would be forthcoming. The evacuees were ready to build their own chairs and tables if the Administration would supply the lumber, but that "if" also was a pending point. Thus the individual evacuee who had enough funds to buy his lumber privately from companies outside the Center, could know the comfort of a chair and table in his home. The Administration had no objections to private purchase of lumber, but neither had it any way of supplying money wherewith to make that purchase. The "poor man" stood up in his home, or sat on boxes, or "found" lumber and nails in the project area. No one was supplied with the promised furniture.

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2 Sugar The situation in regard to the release of sugar was changing slowly. Three weeks after the time when a private shipment of sugar reached the Center warehouse, delivery was still not forthcoming. The Assistant Project Director asked the Project Director to release the confiscated sugar, but the foreman of the freight section continued to advise residents that they could not have more than two pounds of sugar sent in from the outside. This was imposition and a protest was lodged, whereupon the Information Center was charged with the responsibility of having the rule verified. Query of the Administration again revealed that sugar was not subject to confiscation. The complainant was advised to inquire again at the warehouse where confiscation was supposed to have taken place. Finally on June 19, through the efforts of the Information office, the sugar was released at the police station.

3 Jobs Considerable uneasiness and dissension was felt in some departments in regard to the way the Personnel Department was functioning. Already, some departments were being disorganized and it was feared that people would be shifted into other jobs. Rumors were floating about which made workers feel uncertain and insecure as to work conditions, and this in turn produced its own strain and worry.

B Camouflage Net Project

A topic of major discussion among the residents in June was the matter of improving labor conditions in the net-weaving project. Argument and statement, many of them founded only on opinion, were passed back and forth. Delicate points came up as a result of misunderstandings. For instance, a boy, who was released from the Recreation Section and assigned to the net-weaving project, exclaimed: "Oh, I thought I had lost my citizenship when the Pearl Harbor attack took place."

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1 Beginnings Army engineers began training twenty evacuees to supervise the net project. Approximately 600 men and women were to be employed, with five persons to be assigned to a twenty-foot square net. Riggers were arranged to pull the netting skyward as the work progressed. Already 400 citizens of both sexes above the age of sixteen had been recruited. An experienced fisherman becoming interested in production suggested that the twine be provided and that the evacuees be allowed to weave the original nets, which would not only increase production in the Center but would reduce cost to the Army as well.

Women workers were in great demand as recruitment went on. By the third week in June, 100 more workers per day could be absorbed than were actually working. Even "child labor" was allowed to creep in as minors were taken on without the thorough personnel investigation which a more leisurely recruitment would have made possible.

2 Working Conditions Working conditions at the net factory were far from good. The temperature in June hovered constantly in the 90's and up. The barracks in which the work was done were not air-cooled, and the air was filled with lint which floated upward from the soft cotton threads of the nets. This, evacuees maintained, in a characteristic Japanese fear of tuberculosis, was bad for the lungs. To add to their misery, the chemicals with which the cotton threads were treated produced an exzema-like rash reaction on their hands. Requests were made for goggles and masks to protect the lips and lungs during the dust-stormy days of late spring.

The work itself was confining and back-breaking and the drive for increased production only increased the muscular as well as the nervous strain attached to it. Cold drinks and salt tablets were administered to combat the tendency to heat prostration, regular rest periods were introduced, music was played

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to induce more rhythmic movements; and later on, watermelons were offered as prizes to winning crews; but nothing could lessen the discomforts of working in the net factory.

Fuel for the fire was to be found in the fact that the work at the camouflage net factory was paid for at prevailing WRA rates only. "Sweatshop wages" was what the evacuees dubbed their earnings. There was no reason, they maintained, for such a low wage scale since their work was designated as a military necessity; and it was generally acknowledged that defense work drew high rates of pay. To turn the net-weaving project into a successful venture, it was necessary that higher wages be paid. Requests were made that all jobs be re-rated so that the more attractive office jobs would receive lower ratings than the less attractive factory work. Otherwise, there would be no incentive for the Nisei to work on the camouflage project. Special considerations, such as transportation to or from work, were given. Nisei who were induced to give up jobs to work on the defense project were promised priority and reinstatement in their former jobs when the camouflage work was completed. To free manpower, other departments were asked to pare their staffs "down to the bone" and substitute Issei for Nisei wherever possible.

3 Evacuee Resentment In keeping with a provision of the Geneva Convention that enemy aliens could not be conscripted for war industries, an order had gone forth that only citizens should be employed on the net project. This was at once interpreted by the evacuees as discriminative selection. It produced a hurt and disappointed reaction from the Issei, alien though they were, who wished to make use of the opportunity to show their willingness to help the country of their residence. Many of them had been fisher folk and were familiar with handling nets. They could have contributed materially to the work. The order caused a bitter and cynical reaction from the Nisei because the argument used in asking them to work on the net project was that by taking part in the nation's vast war program they would be "serving their country." Yet that country had reduced them to the status of imprisoned evacuees!

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This insult to pride in citizenship could not be lightly swallowed. In this lay the kernel of the evacuees' resentment. In the evacuation process, the Nisei and Kibei had born as much humiliation as could be heaped upon a citizen, and this in the face of elders who had been the targets of much talk from them on the advantage of citizenship. From the standpoint of this advantage, the second-generation Japanese had even taken steps to get the Issei to yield their power to them.

The JACL had been a leader in the fight to get the rights of the citizen Nisei recognized. In taking that stand, and by drawing attention to the Nisei, the JACL had forced a cleavage between Issei and Nisei. The defense position of the JACL had left no support for the well-behaved resident alien, whom they scarcely considered in their arguments. The elders of the Japanese communities felt they had been "sold out."

Yet in the end, Issei and Nisei had been herded together by the government and treated as one; and in a way, that satisfied neither. The Issei had lived to see their prideful children humbled to their own level of indignity. There in the Center they began witnessing the addition of insult to injury. The Nisei were being put through a sort of semi-compulsory labor process which was bringing very little satisfaction and no reward. All this in the name of patriotism which had been outraged!

Appeals of various kinds were made to recruit people for work on the nets, and to induce them to remain there once they were signed up. Even the Block Leaders' Council was called upon to confer its official sanction to the work. This it did in the form of a resolution:

4 Block Leaders Resolution (FP 1, 25, 6/12/42)

WHEREAS: We, the residents of Manzanar, must give our whole-hearted cooperation to each other and to the Administration in the promotion of our happiness, security and well-being, and

WHEREAS: The government of the United States has given us the opportunity to actively participate in the war effort by the establishment of the camouflage net project, and

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WHEREAS: The feasibility of other projects vital to our welfare is dependent upon the success of this project,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED: That we, the members of the Block Leaders' Council of the Manzanar Relocation Center, do hereby go on record urging every able-bodied man and woman not employed to seek employment and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That every American citizen over 16 years of age make every effort to work this national defense project as a demonstration of his loyalty to his country.

(Signed) _____ Chairman

_____ Secretary

Thus the evacuees who had not been able to take a unified and solid stand in declaring their loyalty before the war, or in resisting the evacuation process itself, were beginning to see value in a united front. Led by articles and editorials in the FREE PRESS, they were urged to make sacrifices to prove their unquestioned loyalty. The especially strong editorial pointed out that by throwing themselves more actively into the defense work they would help to strengthen national morale. They would furthermore lay up for themselves credit for the future when people no longer could deny them the rights and privileges of free Americans.

(June 11, 1942)

5 Hours of Labor In conformity with the desire of the Block Leaders, the Project Director set the hours of labor on the camouflage net project at 44 hours a week, with 8 hours a day for 5 days, and 4 hours on Saturday.

(June 30, 1942)

6 Emergency Meeting The Block Leaders Council called an emergency meeting on June 27, 1942 to discuss the importance of the camouflage net project. The meeting was attended by the Project Director, the Assistant Project Director, and the "key people" of Manzanar, which included about 200 Nisei and Issei leaders.

At this meeting, the Assistant Project Director called for a realistic facing of facts in order that a concerted effort might be made to better

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conditions in the Center. This "heart-to-heart" session was so successful in clearing up rumors and cementing understanding that a decision was reached to hold such meetings regularly twice a month. The next meeting was set for the second Saturday in July.

C English versus Japanese Language

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As a result of the publicity given to the incidents in Santa Anita, the Japanese of Manzanar became fearful. They wished a statement from the Administration as to what they could and could not do. They were becoming concerned lest even their most innocent meetings conducted in Japanese should become suspected. People who were antagonistic towards the men conducting the meetings could create trouble by reporting them. Thus the alien residents in the Center could be left to the mercy of the citizen residents who might maliciously inform on activities and attitudes the aliens engaged in, even though the citizens might not necessarily understand what these were.

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VI ISSEI-NISEI RIVALRIES AND COMPARISONS

In June, a memo appeared in the Report General of the Information Office speculating as to which were more disconsolate over their confinement in camp, the Issei or the Nisei. It is interesting to learn from this memo some of the points which distinguished the adjustment of the two.

A General Restlessness

1 Disappointment and Fears The Nisei had given up fine career opportunities to undergo evacuation; and from this standpoint, they did not cease to deplore their loss. The Issei, elderly and helpless, had lost what they had had in power and property; but their reaction had been not to deplore outspokenly, but to withdraw into their shells like "taunted snails."

Deeply disappointed and humiliated and unreconciled to the turn of events which had precipitated them and their children into the camps, the Issei felt as though they were constantly, although silently, apologizing to their citizen-offspring for having brought their fate upon them. On the other hand, the attitude expressed in administrative rulings and in the mouths of the Nisei was that the Issei did not need to be taken into account because they were enemy aliens and old. Such an attitude tended to create pessimism, which in turn discouraged the Issei from advancing the progress of the project. Because they were not trying to keep up with the developments, their very stagnation was creating a cancerous growth within themselves.

Fears, uncertainties, insecurity, and worry were holding the Issei in a state bordering on panic. From this came their frenzied desire to hoard rice by the dozen sacks. In some apartments, the police had found as many as 20 to 30 sacks stacked up against a feared emergency. Mess halls might run out of food, they claimed; and in war time, supplies might not get through from Los Angeles. Families which did not hoard felt very shakey and unprotected.

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A statement as to the ultimate objectives of the WRA was called for from the Administration that would be calculated to allay some of the unsubstantiated apprehensions which had the people of Manzanar in its grip.

2 Need for Information The Information Service which conveyed the request also indicated that to keep the residents abreast of what was happening in Center planning and development, a weekly talk on new developments and objectives in project affairs, such as that made currently by the mayor to the people of Los Angeles, would be most welcome to the knowledge-hungry evacuees.

As long as there was no censorship in the Center, they suggested, too, that it would be in order for the Block Leaders to report back to their constituents as to what had transpired at the block meetings. It seemed apparent in the beginning--that is, before the Block Leaders Council got under way--that most of the matter discussed between the Block Leaders and the Administration was being held confidential. Since the Block Leaders were representatives of the people, this should not be allowed to happen. Confidential matters should be known only to officials. What Block Leaders knew should be known also to the people.

3 Rebuilding Morale Such were the strains of restlessness and resentment which were breaking down the morale of Manzanar.

To rebuild this morale, as one official recognized, was to begin by restoring in the minds of the Nisei a faith in their American citizenship. Whatever destroyed that faith would contribute to subversive tendencies.

To rebuild morale among the Issei required doing away with the distinctions which prohibited aliens from holding key positions. The aliens had been banned first from holding appointments on the police force, then from voting, then from holding office in the self-government council of Block Leaders. Placing elders under juniors, parents under children, (which is what it amounted to in placing Issei under Nisei) was so contrary to all Japanese custom and tradition that it could bring only turmoil to an evacuee community.

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At the end of June, the Assistant Project Director left for San Francisco to carry his problem to the Regional Director. On the report he brought back to Manzanar would depend much of the Center's future stability. Just before his departure, an agitating evacuee called a mass meeting (Fred Tayama) to protest against violation of the rights of the Japanese-American citizens. Calling off this mass meeting was one of the last things the Assistant Project Director had to do before he left.

A number of suggestions were advanced by the evacuees, particularly by the elderly residents, intended to improve conditions in camp so that the whole population would profit mutually in terms of comfort and convenience. Voluntary regulations to turn off lights by 10:00 p.m., to avoid noises after that hour, even such minor noises as that caused by the use of the wooden geta in walking on wood floors, attention to sanitary considerations in the showers and latrines, keeping the grounds clear of nails and rubbish, and similar proposals were offered.

Other Issei suggestions had to do with a more positive and constructive aspect of camp life: Block Leaders were advised to take the initiative in encouraging a spirit of voluntary service, at least of community service, as a means of strengthening unity among the residents. In the activities mentioned as worthy of Block Leader sponsorship were gymnastic exercises and daily walks around the Center, recreational activities within the blocks which might be passed on to other blocks, recruitment of helpers for the fire-fighting force in case of fire, reinforcement of the police force, unloading goods from trucks when hired labor forces were insufficient to do the work, developing block victory gardens, organizing open forums and discussion groups; and in general, stimulating the minds and muscles of Manzanar into action.

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B Changes in Administration Add to Uncertainties

During the short time the evacuees had been in Manzanar, the Administration changed over their heads, and each change added its bit to a general feeling of insecurity in the camp. Just as the residents were becoming accustomed to the officers who had presided over their destinies under the WCCA, news came that the WCCA was going out of existence and that it would be replaced by the WRA. This shift of authority became concretized on May 19, when the new WRA director was introduced to Manzanar in person. Actually, the change was a step in the direction of stability; for it was a switch from an assumption of temporariness to one of permanence for camp management; and this should have brought security. But changes in personnel are always apt to be disturbing when people have become familiar with the personalities of their first administrators.

Nevertheless, the evacuees could still anticipate the possibility of unknown physical changes, such as a reorganization in the set-up of camp life, changes in policies, in rules and regulations, in immediate objectives for the camp, and in the long-range goals for the residents. Dependence on the wisdom and goodwill and understanding of administrative officials are too closely linked with the strength and quality of those traits in the sources of support. Should weakness and inferiority become manifest, uncertainty and insecurity would be sure to follow.

A few days after the WRA took over, a booklet was distributed called "The War Relocation Work Corps," issued by Director Milton Eisenhower from Washington. This booklet gave something of the philosophy and outlook of the WRA (??????) and correlatively brought some relief to the evacuees in that it told them what to expect from their keepers, and what was expected of them by the government.

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