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COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT HANDBOOK

A Summation of the Functions, Organization, and
Relationships of the Council and Administration.

War Relocation Authority
1943

September , 1943

FOREWORD

A Community Government Manual was issued October 1, 1942, which emphasized the role of the temporary councils, the preparation of a plan for permanent government, and some remarks on the organization and function of the permanent council. The present handbook presents in summary and generalized form some of the insights gained and techniques used during the past year. These are stated in terms of the functions, organizations, and relationships of the council and the administration. ✓ ?

Community Government is a significant segment of the War Relocation Authority program. It can and has made many contributions. Through common understanding of policies and procedures, residents and the administration can work hand in hand for efficient center operation and in the paramount task of reintegrating its people with ^{America} ~~people~~.

Director

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HANDBOOK OF COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT

"Government ought not to do everything by force; it is only the body which submits to that; nothing but wisdom can extend its empire over the mind. When a government orders, it but gives its subjects an artificial interest to obey; when it enlightens, it gives them an interior motive, the influence of which they cannot evade. The best method of instruction is the simple publication of facts, but sometimes it is advisable to aid the public in forming a judgment upon those facts." - Jeremy Bentham "The Theory of Legislation."

I. INTRODUCTION

The two major objectives of the War Relocation Authority are to facilitate the resettlement of evacuees into the main current of American life and to provide during that resettlement process the basic necessities and services within the relocation centers.

Most of the problems within a relocation center are similar to those which any new community faces in its initial adjustments. These are problems of health, education, law and order, employment, food, housing, recreation, production, and maintenance. The more unique problems include relocation, the temporary and emergency nature of many activities, the disruptive effects of evacuation, the identification of the evacuees with an enemy group, and the general setting of hostility engendered by war.

The solution of these problems is the joint responsibility of the War Relocation Authority and the evacuees and no satisfactory answer can be found to many difficulties except through cooperative efforts. Such cooperation is most effective when each cooperator understands the differing roles and responsibilities and when confidence and mutual respect are maintained. Community Government has as one of its objectives the provision of machinery by which administration and the evacuees can work out these problems in an organized and systematic manner.

Community government is not self-government of and by the evacuees alone. It is not self-government because in addition to the legal limitations, the need for cooperative effort on the part of administration and evacuees eliminates the desirability of completely independent action on the part of either. But within the cooperative relationship there still exists a real opportunity for the development of sound administration and effective democratic action. This development to date has been sometimes erratic and sometimes slow, but a measureable degree of progress has been made at all centers and at some the record is outstanding.

The growth of stable and integrated communities has come in spite of major obstacles. The evacuees have had only limited civic experience in their recent history, and were in disagreement on many major issues among themselves, a disagreement rooted in the fact that the Japanese in America were neither socially nor economically homogeneous. The population is split into Christian and Buddhist and each of these are further sub-divided into many sects. Occupation ranges from the unskilled laborer to the highly trained professional man with a high proportion of agriculturists,

small tradesmen and persons in service occupations. Loyalties are divided by the accident of birth and age distribution.

There are some characteristics shared by all. The residents are of Japanese descent. They have had the common experience of evacuation. They are called "evacuees", resident in a relocation center, under the supervision of a non-Japanese administrative staff, guarded by soldiers. Facilities within the center are at almost dead level uniformity. There is little variation in wages, housing, food, or other essential services.

It is against this economic and cultural diversity of the inhabitants and within the requirements of physical and administrative uniformity that any center program, including government, has had to develop. This handbook is intended as an aid to the further development of the community through responsible, representative government.

II. THE FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT

A. Advisory

One of the most difficult but important functions of the Community Council is its advisory role. It is important because the Council is in a strategic position to reflect evacuee attitudes and to organize and direct opinions of the evacuees. It is difficult because administration for one reason or another may find it impossible to carry evacuee recommendations into effect. The Council, if it finds its advice and recommendations being ignored or not followed, can easily develop a non-cooperative and negative attitude. For that reason, it is important that sympathetic attention be given to the recommendations of the Council, and full explanations be

given where the action proposed is not feasible and credit be given where Council advice is followed.

Administration leadership can be exercised by keeping the Council occupied with problems that give it the feeling of contributing to community welfare. The Council may properly be requested to prepare plans for initiating or administering specific programs.

If the administration does not bring the Council into its confidence, it is inevitable that the Council will consider problems on its own initiative with the possible result of having administration and council out of step with each other.

B. Communication

The community council occupies a strategic position in the dissemination of information from the administration to the residents and in advising the administration of the wishes and desires of the residents. An adequate communication system facilitates understanding and mutual cooperation between administration and the evacuees.

It is obvious that the more complex an organization becomes, and the more people involved, the difficulties of communication increase. The only solution to such difficulties is the creation of an administrative structure with well defined channels for the free flow of facts, ideas, etc., from one individual to another. The individual or psychological aspect of communication presents an equally difficult problem. Our experience has been that too often the facts have been interpreted against a background of experience which is not shared equally by appointed personnel and evacuees. The inevitable result is misunderstanding and frequently unexpected explosions of one kind or another.

In developing a system of communication and in transmitting information and ideas, there are several cautions. We must never assume that people know the facts, that there is common understanding, or that a plan of action has been agreed upon. In other words, there is need for continuous indoctrination. One good check to find out if we have been successful in transmitting information or ideas is to make spot checks to get an explanation from those concerned of what was said.

There are three basic principles that should be observed in insuring an adequate communication system. The first is that the communication should conform to the lines of authority. For example, the Project Director or his representatives should be the principal ones to have contacts with the Community Council; similarly, there should be insistence that through the Council or its affiliated bodies, information is transmitted to the administration.

The second principle is that communication should be systematic. Specific care should be taken that the same channels are used in each comparable situation and that the same individuals or groups participate in this relationship. Communication should also be regular and frequent. Formal contacts between the Council and the administration should take place weekly.

The third principle is that information transmitted is meaningful. Each communication should be phrased in understandable language and should be of concern to those who are reached.

The organization of communication channels will include use of the Council to relay through its members information to the blocks. In turn,

the blocks, through their representatives or through the action of block councils, can pass on information to the council and thence to the administration. The use of official announcements on bulletin boards and through the newspapers can be utilized as effectively by the Council as by the administration, but face to face relations are a more desirable means of dissemination of information for both council and administration.

C. Planning

The contribution of the Community Council in planning programs for center administration is an important one and has been generally underestimated. The development of a systematic program for meeting problems is not only the responsibility of the administration, but also of the residents. The council, as the officially elected representatives of the residents, can assume a major role in planning for resettlement, maintenance of law and order, employment, production, and for other services and activities of importance within a relocation center.

The administrative staff can assist the council in its planning function by pointing out from time to time the major problems of administration and requesting advice as to procedures which should be developed. The council in turn can inform the residents of these problems and request their participation in finding solutions to these problems. The device of establishing special commissions to examine specific problems is a desirable procedure.

D. Ceremonial

In any normal community the city council acts as the formal representatives of the community. The mayor or councilmen are present at dedicatory and commemorative exercises which are held in the community. Proclamations

are issued for holidays and events of community or national interest. There are a number of similar occasions in relocation centers where the council can lend its prestige by making formal appearances or announcements.

By giving formal approval and encouragement to various types of community events, such as the Red Cross Drive, Boy Scout exercises, dedications, graduations, and similar events in which all or part of the community participates, the council can facilitate and aid in the success of such activities. The successful drive to raise funds for scholarships by the Parent-Teachers Association at one center first received the endorsement of the community council.

The inauguration of each new council with appropriate ceremonies, speeches, etc., should be considered. An outside speaker such as some local attorney or official might be invited to deliver the main address.

III. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE COUNCIL

A. Council Committees

Most legislative groups have found the use of committees to be the most effective method for facilitating action. The function of the committee is to permit a small group of the legislative body to assemble the necessary facts pertinent to the problem, to organize these facts, and to present them to the legislative body for consideration and action. The procedure is time-saving and efficient, and eliminates the confusion which would result if each member of a group attempted to gather all the information.

It has been the practice of councils to establish a number of standing committees. These committees are always ready to meet specific

problems of education, health, recreation, employment, relocation, law and order, public relations, transportation and supply, public welfare, community morale and similar civic matters. In addition, councils have also created temporary committees to deal with special problems which have arisen from time to time. Most councils have an executive or administrative committee which considers over-all problems of the community and maintains close working relations with the Project Director. ✓ (2)

B. Boards and Commissions

While the primary function of council committees is to keep the council informed on the status of current problems and to advise intelligent action in regard to such situations, the boards and commissions composed of non-council members have a somewhat different function. These groups may be either advisory to the council, to the administration, or to some other group. Some of these boards may operate semi-independently of the council. In a normal city there are citizen-composed boards for the libraries, schools, health activities, planning and zoning, etc. Such non-council groups have not as yet been widely used. Administration might well encourage the council to create such boards for the library, schools, labor relations, employment, relocation, and other civic functions which permit semi-permanent and semi-independent bodies.

The persons appointed to membership on these boards should hold office independently of council elections. Their term of office should probably be for a period of not less than six months, with re-appointment the usual procedure. The advantage of a semi-permanent board is to ensure that community interest and participation in such affairs do not lapse with the election of a new council. These groups will have a continuity over and beyond that of the council committees.

With each new board, the council should establish certain rules governing membership, frequency of meetings, and reports. The council should insist that these boards provide regular reports to the council of their meetings and their activities. The appointment of a council member on each board has been followed at some centers.

C. Block Organization

The block group has become an important social unit at many centers. The block population often works together in cooperative social, economic, or political activities. The cohesion of the block is frequently manifested by a formal organization with a council to discuss block problems and decide upon major and minor problems. Meetings are sometimes held weekly.

The block group offers an excellent opportunity for organized administration-evacuee contacts. Working through and with the community council and the block representative, meetings can be utilized to bring to the residents current administration problems, new policies, and in general used to promote better understanding and increase morale. Meetings arranged by the block representative for the Project Director would attract considerable interest and would provide an opportunity for him to become better acquainted with the older people and learn of their problems. Such meetings would also give him an opportunity to review the project program and to answer questions.

The Community Council can foster block participation by having each block representative report each week at a block meeting current community problems and actions taken by the Community Council.

D. Permanent Employees of the Council

The number of persons available for conducting the business of the

council on a full-time basis is limited. Provision has been made for an executive secretary, two clerk-stenographers, and a messenger. In addition, the chairman of the council is paid for full-time work in connection with council affairs. Provision can be made for the employment on a part-time basis of an interpreter for use at council meetings and translation of council minutes and reports.

E. Bi-lingualism

Many of the Issei elected to council membership will have greater facility in speaking Japanese than English. Some may know no English and some Nisei will know little or no Japanese. The bi-lingual character of the council poses certain problems that should be resolved at an early date. It is essential that English be the official language. Interpreters should be provided for those who will find difficulty in either speaking or understanding the proceedings. All minutes should be released in both English and Japanese.

F. Parliamentary Procedures

Most legislative bodies develop their own parliamentary procedures. These are the result of long years of usage and custom. Robert's "Rules of Order" represents a systematization of such rules and is generally considered authoritative for this country.

Formal parliamentary procedures are in some ways contrary to the normal pattern of discussion in informal community groups. This can be observed in block meetings where there is little need for a formalized set of rules since it is the practice for each person who has something to say to be heard in turn and the decision is made from an orderly discussion.

Generally speaking, the older Japanese are accustomed to this system while the younger ones are acquainted with the formal motion and discussion procedure. Among all old-world Japanese there is a great desire for unanimity.

It is probable that with many Issei on the council there will be a tendency for council business to be conducted Japanese style with long and thorough discussion of each point at issue. Such discussions may produce impatience among the younger members, but when decisions are finally reached, they will represent sound judgment. The formal statement of these decisions should conform to recognized parliamentary procedures.

G. Official Reports of the Council

The Executive Secretary should assume responsibility for the keeping of minutes of council meetings, reports of committees, and other official action by any group connected with community Government. Copies of minutes and other reports should be made available to each councilman, to the press, and to key administration officials.

An excellent procedure for summarizing council actions and for evaluating the effectiveness of council work is to provide for interim reports of council activities. These reports should probably be made at least every three months. The reports should be for the use of the council and for giving to the residents a connected story of recent happenings and action taken. Such a report should also be made available to the Project Director and, in fact, should be requested by him.

IV. ADMINISTRATION-COUNCIL RELATIONSHIPS

A. Role of the Administrative Staff

The project director, the assistant project director in charge of community management, and the project attorney are the three individuals most concerned with the activities and functions of the Community Council. The major responsibilities of these three persons are liaison, leadership, and technical advice.

The project director occupies the key position for liaison between the National Director and the community and fulfills the function of liaison through the community council. On the project director also rests a large measure of the responsibility for leadership. This leadership has been best exercised by counseling with the council on major problems and by requesting from the council advice for the development of procedures for effecting policies.

The assistant director in charge of community management is specifically charged with the organization and functioning of the community council. His role is that of liaison between the council and the project director and between the council and other administrative officers on the project staff. His leadership is important in the field of organization and it is his responsibility to assist the council in the exercise of its functions. As an adviser to the council he should make certain that the council is relaying information in a systematic and effective way to the residents. He should assist in developing cooperative relations between committees and boards of the council and the administrator in charge of some portion of community administration such as education, health services, etc.

The project attorney's responsibility to the council is largely in the field of technical advice. In this capacity his role is similar to that of a city attorney. He assists the council in the drafting and wording of regulations and resolutions. He should have an important part in problems of law and order and the functioning of the Judicial Commission. The project attorney can render valuable advice and assistance to the Judicial Commission in developing court procedures and in applying the judicial principles governing the enforcement of law and order.

B. The Lines of Authority

As is true with any organization, it is necessary that the lines of authority be observed in council relations. There has been a tendency at some projects for minor administrative officials to present problems to the council without prior approval of the project director. There has been an even greater tendency for pressure groups within the community to by-pass the council and deal directly with the project director. The best procedure seems to be the one which has worked successfully at one project where the project director refuses to recognize any self-appointed group or committee which purports to speak for the residents unless such group is a creation of the council. In this particular instance, the project director has referred the complaint or suggestion presented by this group to the community council and requested its advice and action.

The desirability of this procedure should be apparent. Although the project director should be readily accessible it should be in a systematic manner. If the project director allows groups to by-pass the council, he automatically detracts from the authority of the council and weakens the

council in the eyes of the residents. On the other hand, if he continually insists that all community problems come through the council to him, he will increase the stature of the council in the community and permit it to perform one of its major functions, that of communication between the residents and the administration.

It is to be expected that from time to time the occasion will arise when members of the administrative staff will desire to appear before the council to present some problem or proposition. Such appearance should be limited and should be made only with the approval of the project director or of the assistant director in charge of community management.

C. Official Announcements

It is desirable that some systematic plan be worked out and followed for making official announcements. One such system could include joint announcements by the project director and the community council with subsequent publication in the center newspaper and posting on bulletin boards. Following such announcement and depending upon its nature, councilmen can hold block or district meetings with the residents for further elaboration and discussion of the significance and effect of such announcements. In any event, it is desirable that the community council be fully informed of every major decision affecting the community.

D. Council Training

Many of the persons who will be elected councilmen have not had previous parliamentary or legislative experience, nor have they had experience in dealing with the total problems of a community. For this reason, it is desirable that opportunities be available for councilmen to become acquainted

with duties of their office. The council itself can accomplish much through the use of committees; however, a more systematic procedure would be desirable.

A memorandum has been sent to the projects suggesting the establishment of an adult education course in applied political science. Such a course, if properly organized and developed with the assistance of the council, could do much to provide the kind of training and information needed to assist the council in its work.

The incoming council could also be materially assisted by sitting in with the old council for the last one or two meetings preceding its inauguration.

V. THE OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

The administration and community government should have specific objectives for the well-being of relocation center residents. There are two major objectives. The first is the establishment of procedures for the working out of community problems in a democratic manner. This requires the assumption of a considerable degree of responsibility on the part of residents, of wide participation in community problems, and of training in citizenship. The second responsibility is that of utilizing the qualifications and abilities of the residents and of the resources at their command in the most productive manner possible.

The fulfillment of these two objectives are interdependent. The administration and the community council through leadership and planning, and the residents through understanding of the problems and need for action,

can work out plans for the full utilization of manpower and resources. These resources, as long as relocation centers exist, are as much a responsibility of the community as of the administrative staff. As soon as the residents begin to assume responsibility in a community sense, these resources will be utilized, but before this responsibility can be adequately developed there must be the opportunity for participation by residents in planning for productive effort and in assisting in the execution of plans. It is through such interdependent action that there will develop the sense of participation in the problems of the community and of achievement in the reaching of objectives.

VI. PROBLEMS OF THE COMMUNITY

The problems of the relocation center are surprisingly similar to the problems of any normal community. The major problems are those of keeping people fed, housed, clothed, of maintaining law and order, of providing education and recreation, of safeguarding health, of beautifying and improving surroundings, and in general, keeping the community functioning and well organized.

There are some special problems which are unique to a relocation center. These special problems arise from the evacuation and relocation center life.

The policy of resettlement creates two major problems for the community. There is the double obligation to encourage and facilitate the depopulation of the centers and, to ensure adequate services for those who remain behind. The community should aid in the development of

pressures to encourage resettlement. As this process accelerates, the more able and aggressive will be drawn off. There will be greater demand made of those remaining to assume the burden of community operation.

A second major characteristic unique to the relocation center is the fact that it is not based on a sound economy. The economy of a relocation center is primarily an economy of the U. S. Treasury. As long as Federal funds are available, there will be supplied food, housing, and other services. Nevertheless, it is to be expected that there will be increasing pressures to utilize local resources of land and manpower in producing additional quantities of goods needed for local consumption. As long as the resource base is inadequate to provide a sound local economy, there will be the false economy based on Federal appropriations.

The normal problems of the community can be met in much the same manner as any community meets its problems. Granting that there are insufficient persons skilled to assume the responsibility for education, health, etc., through improvisation and through imaginative planning, much can be done to maintain the standards which normal communities have set for themselves in these regards.