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A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE RELOCATION PROGRAM AND ITS PROBLEMS
PREPARED BY THE CHICAGO STAFF OF THE EVACUATION AND RESETTLEMENT STUDY

Some characteristic adjustments of resettlers

In any attempt to understand the problems of adjustment among evacuees who relocate in Mid-Western communities, at least three characteristics of their mentality should be taken into account. First, the newness and strangeness of Mid-Western communities to most West Coast Japanese produce a mental state filled with confusion and uncertainties, as well as apprehensions mingled with hope, about the life they are entering upon. Second, there is a strong consciousness of themselves as "evacuees", or as persons of Japanese ancestry who are at the moment the most suspected group in the United States, and this self-consciousness is a source of inhibition that obstructs free action and thinking. Third, the continual barrage of accusations against the group, particularly since the widespread publicity of the Dies Committee Hearings, is a source of constant irritation and feelings of insecurity, and because the evacuees are least able to defend themselves against this type of attack, the inevitable consequence is a feeling either of helplessness or of frustration. Apart from these subjective factors influencing the adjustment of resettlers, however, there are also numerous practical considerations that influence their behavior. There are the problems of reestablishing themselves economically following the disaster of evacuation, saving funds for the sake of future security, finding a place in American society, and relocating parents and relatives who still remain in the centers. The point that requires emphasis is that the resettler starts his new life with a series of very real and difficult problems confronting him, and whether he is consciously aware of them or nor is not entirely a matter of importance for he is sooner or later required

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to take cognizance of them.

The consequent reaction among resettlers as they enter upon their new life is an initial confusion as to how they should start off in the new community and of what they may expect from the majority group. There are those who arrive with extremely high hopes of the goals they will achieve, and these individuals invariably encounter serious disappointments before they are able to readjust their view to correspond with real conditions; there are those who arrive with an initial skepticism or cynicism about fair dealings at the hands of the majority group, and every adverse experience is regarded as added evidence to support their initial pessimism. In the majority of cases, however, there is a suspension of judgment and anticipation with the thought in mind that problems may be met as they arise, but this state of mind hampers the use of foresight and prevents the planning of action to make for maximum efficiency of adjustment. Because of this confusion and absence of foresight as well as a lack of understanding of the problems that are likely to arise, there is, in general, a considerable time spent among most resettlers in trial and error adjustments as they seek to clarify the possibilities in the new community.

Most evacuees relocating to a Mid-Western community, then, in a sense, enter upon an area that is to them a vacuum and in which new patterns of life must be drawn. But coupled with this absence of expectations about their new life, there is also a considerable pressure of feeling that adjustments must be made quickly. In part this pressure arises from the high cost of living during the first week or more immediately following their departure from the center. Perhaps equally important is the urge to "get started again" after a year of stagnation in the relocation center, and to make up for lost time. Finally, there is the subjective need to reestablish life

routines that were familiar to them in pre-evacuation days, or some other routines that would prove satisfactory to them. While there is, on the one hand, this pressure to make quick adjustments in the new community, there are, on the other hand, the innumerable barriers of prejudice that most resettlers are unprepared to contend with, and the personal problems created under these circumstances are inevitable sources of feelings of insecurity, frustration, and restlessness.

Suggested programs to aid adjustment

If this analysis represents with accuracy the condition that is to be found among resettlers in this region, it seems desirable that certain programs should be initiated in the W.R.A. field offices, especially in metropolitan centers.

(1) To minimize the intial confusion and the consequent tendency towards random behavior, there should be a more thorough-going program of education for resettlers to inform them regarding what they may expect in the process of relocation and of how it is desirable for them to conduct themselves. This education may very well begin in the relocation centers where informed persons may be used as counsellors to prospective resettlers to tell them of problems they should be aware of, and of possible ways of dealing with these problems. A booklet informing resettlers about the procedure of relocation, suggestions on modes of travel, agencies that will aid resettlers, and even suggestions regarding conduct, may be of value to them.

At the receiving end of relocation, it seems necessary that a careful counselling program be initiated in the W.R.A. field offices. Perhaps due to the W.R.A. policy on relocation, but also because of the shortage of personnel, the field offices have taken on the characteristics of "employment

offices". The need of the resettler, however, is for a more personalized relationship in these offices, advice on his problems, and a sympathetically offered encouragement towards greater independence. This is not to say that the policies of these offices are at present contrary to these aims; it is a question of emphasis. Counsellors should be chosen preferably from persons of Japanese ancestry with training in social welfare, or from others with good judgment and understanding about human problems. The number of these counsellors should be adequate to give more than passing attention to individual resettlers, and to have time for follow-ups on difficult cases. The addition of a few such workers should facilitate the general work of the offices if they are properly placed in the office system, and should reduce the chances of undesirable conduct from maladjusted individuals.

There are reasons to be concerned about the amount of job shifting and evidences of irresponsibility that is apparent among certain groups of resettlers. In part the tendency to change jobs arises from maladjustments in the jobs in which resettlers are first placed; equally as often the maladjustment is only indirectly with the job and more directly in the social life of the resettlers. The counselling program should be of aid in getting individuals to think out more clearly what they want to do, and in seeking out work that best fits them. At the same time it should be recognized that a certain amount of random searching is inevitable among a people that is attempting to find their place in a new community. With regard to irresponsibility, it is in part the result of inability to define goals, frustrations in seeking opportunities, absence of security, and in some cases the lack of intimate contacts. It should also be borne in mind that in many immigrant Japanese families the Nisei were never taught to assume important responsibilities for it was the custom that parents should make the final decisions.

Wise counselling should be of aid to individuals in helping to solve their personal problems and advising them on their responsibilities.

There are some cases in which the need is for concrete financial assistance rather than mere counselling. If possible, it would be desirable that the W.R.A. should provide a more ample resettlement grant than has hitherto been given.

(2) Much concern has been expressed by agencies interested in relocation about the problem of integrating resettlers into American society. The need for a greater degree of assimilation into American society among people of Japanese ancestry is undeniable. In the case of the Issei it is doubtful that any further assimilation can be achieved at this late stage, but there is both a need as well as a possibility of furthering assimilation among the Nisei. Some organizations have suggested elaborate programs for undertaking this task, and there is the notable instance of a plan for form "transitional" organizations of Nisei to facilitate this work. But the wisdom of such ambitious programs of assimilation may be questioned on various scores; the history of assimilation in other immigrant groups leads to the conclusion that assimilation takes place as slow and more or less unconscious process.

However, it seems not amiss to constantly propagandize the desirability of assimilation, and to maintain a persistent education of Nisei towards the goal of integrating themselves into American society. A wise counselling program could be of aid in this matter, and this is perhaps as much as the W.R.A. should undertake in formally organizing a program of assimilation.

(3) Little consideration seems to have been given, thus far, to the maintenance of health among resettlers, but most resettlers are arriving in the Mid-West with insufficient funds to meet the contingencies of ill health.

The field offices might be of aid to resettlers by advising them of various hospitalization and health insurance plans that they may subscribe to at low cost.

(4) Not a little demoralization is developing among resettlers because of discriminatory attitudes among the majority group in regards to employment, housing, and education. In the city of Chicago, several cases have already appeared where resettlers are accepted by landlords and then later are told to move out because of the pressure from neighbors. There are other instances in which resettlers are accepted, but later are asked not to have evacuee visitors in their home. There is a need for the W.R.A. to give more attention to these problems of housing, not only to give stronger support of the resettler tenant's case, but also to steer resettlers away from undesirable places of residence.

Regarding public school education, the Chicago School Board has a ruling that school children whose parents or legal guardians are not living in the city must pay non-residence fees of $18 per month. For evacuee school children whose parents are still in the centers, this ruling not only constitutes a barrier against attendance in the public schools, but it is unjust since their choice of residence here was not entirely voluntary. Although the W.R.A. as well as individual persons have contested the ruling as applied to evacuee school children, the only reply of the School Board has been that these cases will be treated individually. Thus far, not a single case has been ruled upon favorably, and it seems that their decision was merely a way of sidetracking the issue. If the W.R.A. cannot gain a more favorable decision from the Chicago School Board, some means of subsidizing evacuee school children must be found or a great number of them will find it difficult to continue their schooling.

Concluding remarks

It seems that the W.R.A. policy on relocation to this time has been influenced by certain important purposes:

(1) to resettle evacuees as rapidly as their loyalty is determined, and as rapidly as American communities are prepared to receive them.

(2) to wean the evacuees away from the W.R.A. as rapidly as possible, that is, to reduce evacuee attitudes of dependence which presumably were the results of their life in the centers.

(3) to promote the absorption of evacuees into the normal stream of American life as far as feasible.

There seems no reason to question the desirability of attempting to realize or approximate these aims. The difficulty of this program, however, lies in striking a favorable balance between pushing the program too fast or of restraining it too much. For example, there is the question of the rapidity with which evacuees may be relocated in American communities without arousing hostility among the majority group already established there; and there is the question of whether to wean evacuees away from dependence upon the W.R.A. almost immediately after employment has been established for the resettler, or whether to maintain some control over them for a period of time.

From the standpoint of the resettlers, the latter point is a matter of some concern, and the general policy followed by the field offices of "throwing evacuees on their own" as quickly as possible is a source of resentment among them. While admitting the theoretical desirability of giving independence to resettlers as completely as possible, as well as the practical difficulty of maintaining supervision over any large number of resettlers with a limited personnel, there are important reasons for urging a more careful supervision over resettlers than has hitherto been given

them during their initial period of adjustment. The assumption underlying the present W.R.A. policy in this regard is apparently the democratic idea that free men, whether they be resettlers or otherwise, should have the right to seek their own way, within the limits of the law, without interference from the government. But the fact that the government exercised control over the people of Japanese ancestry by evacuating them from the Pacific Coast and placed them in a unique category among the people of the United States has created a condition that does not permit of closing the case once an evacuee has been relocated and employment has been given him. The stigma of the label "evacuee" continues beyond the day a person leaves the relocation center, and sets barriers for him that may continue beyond the duration of the war. Viewed in this light the complaint of some evacuees that the W.R.A. does not give sufficient sympathetic attention to their individual problems is not alone a plea arising from self-pity or personal weakness. There seem to exist genuine and serious difficulties for the resettlers which they are incapable of overcoming by themselves.

If the problems of resettlers among people of Japanese ancestry be realistically considered, it is not sufficient to treat them as any other group of Americans once they are outside the centers. Ideally it is desirable to treat them as Americans, and it is a goal for which to strive, but practically speaking there are special problems of the group that are distinguished from the problems of other groups. These resettlers must be handled as would be any other ethnic group in America, with an understanding of their cultural background, their psychological predispositions, and the unique experiences they have had in America. This means that the relocation program may not be for them: it points to the need to consider more deeply

and realistically what will be the probable consequences to the lives of a people who undergo a massive involuntary movement from one part of the country to another, and to treat the problems of change and adjustment as an organic whole.

The suggestion is that the W.R.A.'s conception of the relocation program needs to be enlarged. Obviously, this view fails to take account of the practical difficulties on the side of the W.R.A. that stands in the way of establishing a more ideally suited relocation program. This report is offered, therefore, not in any spirit of condemnation, but with the hope that it may aid in evaluating the work that is being accomplished.