

Carey McWilliam

CONFIDENTIAL, PLEASE.

On Monday, June 15, 1942, accompanied by Major Norman Beasley of WCCA, I made an inspection of the reception centers at Pomona and Santa Anita.

The Pomona Center is located on the Fair Grounds and there are approximately 5,000 Japanese at the camp. Mr. Laughton, of the civilian staff, showed us through. A number of physical details about the camp need correction. Streets should be better graded and should have some gravel surface. Provisions for the reception of visitors are bad. I checked definitely on the food situation at Pomona since we had received a complaint. The staff admitted that there was some confusion at the outset, but that this seems to have been corrected. Definitely there are no concessions at Pomona of any kind or character. All food is requisitioned from the Quartermasters Corps of the Army. The hospital at the camp, I was told, lacked adequate facilities and should be expanded. Here, as at Santa Anita, we were told by the civilian staff, that there was an undercurrent of resentment in the camp, but that it was not of major proportions. As at Santa Anita, there are regular "milk stations" throughout the camp to provide milk and special formulas for youngsters. There is no newspaper at Pomona. I had been told by Major Beasley that there was no censorship on communications, but that the camp would not admit any publica-

tions in the Japanese language. However, Laughton of the civilian staff, told me on the side that there was a regular postal or military censorship on the mail, which confirms my own impressions.

There is an interesting craft project at Pomona, which should receive support and backing. I have never seen such marvelous ingenuity in improvising really beautifully decorated objects out of tin cans, bottles, rags, and even bottle tops. They were also carving out of scrap timber wooden shoes to wear in the showers, decorating them very attractively. There is a small library and the librarian told us there was a great demand for what books were available.

There is also, of course, an auxiliary police force made up of volunteers from the camp, and a fire department. I was told that general procedure on reception was as follows:

a very hasty physical examination; a social case history; assignment to quarters; brief explanation of rules and regulations.

Incidentally, these case histories should provide a mine of information and should unquestionably be analyzed by WRA at a later date under some kind of specially set up survey research projects. There is only a slight discipline problem. The officials here, as at Santa Anita, had nothing but praise for the adaptability of the people. There is a lack of community facilities at Pomona, which I understand will be remedied. In one of the halls used for kindergarten they hold religious services, and I am told that the turnout has been

interesting. The Sunday prior to our visit there were six or seven different services and quite a large service on Memorial Day. Aside from the kindergartens which are operated by residents of camp and were organized by these residents, there are no school facilities.

Whether because of size, etc., or not, I cannot tell, but my general impression was that Santa Anita was far more interesting and had more vitality, for some reason. I had thought previously that smaller communities would be desirable, but I am now prepared to modify this impression.

En route to the camp I had asked Major Beasley about the cases of mixed marriages, etc., and in particular mentioned the Smith-Hayward case at Pomona. He denied all knowledge of the case, doubted that such a state of facts could exist. However, Mr. Laughton at the camp, was quite familiar with the case and confirmed in all details the facts which had been given to me. There are 21 members of this family in the Pomona Center, making up nine marriages. There are children in seven of the marriages. All of these youngsters are in the camp. Two of the white husbands are outside the camp. One of the white husbands is with his wife in the camp. Laughton said he had written the entire case up, had submitted it to San Francisco, but had not received authorization to release them. In his judgment they should be released. Major Beasley seemed surprised that they had not been released and suggested that Laughton send the file up for review. This would indicate to me a lack of proper functioning within the organiza-

tion itself. (This case involves the children of one, Hayoshi, who is part Japanese and part French and who married a caucasian. At the time of his marriage he took the name of Hayward. Hayoshi was, as I understand it, only one-fourth Japanese to begin with.)

SANTA ANITA

At the time of our visit to Santa Anita there were 18,562 people in the camp. At Santa Anita we were shown through the camp by Mr. L. W. Feader and by Gene Wilbur. Santa Anita is a very exciting and indescribably moving spectacle. By and large I would say that it represents a miracle of organization and that they are doing a very good job so far as sanitation, health, feeding and shelter are concerned. I talked to half a dozen or so friends who are in the camp. None of them had any complaints about the food. Of course they all complained about having to eat in mess halls -- the fact that they cannot prepare their own food, etc., but this is, of course, unavoidable. Also there is a problem about waiting during the meal shifts. We saw lines outside some of the mess halls stretching for a block and a half. These people were waiting their turns. The camp is made up of some seven districts. In the stables which have been converted into barracks there were about 8500 people, and if anything, I would say that the stables were somewhat better so far as construction was concerned than the newly constructed part of the camp.

They have recently set up a camp council at Santa Anita. There are seven councilmen, each representing a district in the camp. They, in turn, will select a chairman. The issei group is, strangely enough, almost leaderless since many of their leaders are in Missoula, Montana or the other internment camps. One would think that this would have provided the nisei with the opportunity to assume almost complete leadership, but such is not the case. The nisei have four, the issei three, members of the council. It was interesting that here for the first time the issei had a chance to take part in a way in a democratic election. In other words, they were voting for the first time in their lives. All adult residents of the camp were permitted to vote, but only about 47% of those eligible to vote actually voted in the election. My friend, Pat Okura, is a member of the council. He told me that part of the difficulty was that many of the nisei were cynical and took no part in the election, saying in substance, "It's a heluva note to talk to us about democratic self-government, etc., when we cannot even exercise our rights as American citizens." However, Okura seemed to think that this attitude would change, particularly if the council was able to really assist the administration and get some of their points across. He said that to date the management had not listened at all to the people and that there was virtually no contact between the residents and the management. The effect of this was strikingly apparent in what he told me

about personnel. (Incidentally, Okura was formerly personnel technician with the City Civil Service Commission.) He said that in assigning people to jobs the management had not followed any personnel policy. In fact, they had announced that in all the work projects it was a case of first come first served, the only exception being that if a man was a doctor they would, of course, put him on hospital duty. Okura feels that far better results could be obtained by actually interviewing people and finding out what they were qualified to do. He stated, for example, and my own impressions confirm what he said, that the auxiliary police force was made up of young toughs in the camp who did not want to volunteer for anything else.

Santa Anita has almost everything that a good sized city would have -- police force, fire department, newspaper, etc. There are a number of canteens and post offices scattered about through the camp. At the canteens you can buy some 700 articles, ranging from aspirin to a coke. Milke stations are conveniently located throughout the camp. Showers and toilets are scattered throughout the camp, but in many cases are quite a distance from living quarters. The camp is very neat and orderly and they have their own rubbish collection service operated by members of the camp. The utmost ingenuity has been exercised by the residents in decorating their living quarters, and they show much good humor about the whole setup. Streets are called "Bur-lap Row" and there is a house with a sign painted on it, "Haunted House - Wooooo Wooooo". One fellow had improvised a sink in his cabin,

every detail of which was made up of handcarved wood, including faucets, pipes, etc. They have tried to decorate their homes and there are little miniature victory gardens throughout the camp. It is horribly ironical to walk through the camp and see the really large number of service flags in the various windows. There is a 15-piece orchestra in the camp and in the basement of the race stands we saw a group of youngsters practicing on horns and violins, etc., raising a frightful din. They were practicing the "Star Spangled Banner".

Beasley and Feader were quite impressed by what they took for goodnatured kidding and wisecracking on the part of many of the youngsters we spoke to in the camp. I had formed a somewhat different impression since I detected a note of hard cynicism and even a bit of baiting in some of this activity. Synicism is certainly apparent. I was told that many of the young nisei are quite bitter and that they make statements such as, "Wait until this is over and we get out, and we are going to lynch Togo Tanaka and Mike Matsuoko". (Leaders of the Japanese American Citizens League.) The feeling here is that the nisei were sold out by their leaders. Naturally I do not agree altogether with this sentiment, but it is certainly prevalent. It is hard to generalize an impression, but this cynicism distresses me more than anything else. Many of these nisei, prior to December 7th, were almost caricatures of certain tendencies in American life, and the camp life seems even to have exaggerated this tendency. There is much too much

jitterbugging and general loutishness, and the wisecracking is a bit too hard and bitter. Feader told us that there was an ugly undercurrent in the camp, but he did not think it was general. For example, they discovered in the mornings signs painted in chalk at various points in the camp such as, "V for the Axis" and similar slogans. He also told us that there is to his knowledge no prostitution in the camp. My impression is that the birth rate is going to go to spectacular proportions. There are no general recreational facilities of the type to make it possible for the youngsters to get away from their parents - nothing approximating a park, etc. There have been 21 births already in the camp and a number of marriages, and I feel that the 150 bed hospital is going to have its share of maternity cases. Mr. Feader observed, and I think he is correct, that camp life affects the various groupings in different ways -- some of the farmers and day laborers are probably living better than they have ever lived in their lives. On the other hand, the well to do people are the most demoralized and most adversely affected. The levelling off process in the camp is certainly a reality. As I said, the food situation is good. They serve coffee once a day, tea twice a day, camp residents can get milk any time they want it.

Perhaps the worst feature of the camp has to do with the money situation. Many of the people in the camp are running out of money.

And they obviously, as all people do, need many things, particularly shoes, which wear out very quickly on the gravelled streets. There are old people in the camp who are virtually bare-footed at the present time. Regardless of anything that WCCA may have said to the contrary, the practice is to establish a wage scale of from \$8 to \$12 to \$16 per month and to make no charge for support. The first checks have not arrived at Santa Anita, but they were expected. Even this little amount of money would be helpful, but the policy it seems to me is cockeyed. For example, they have a big camouflage netmaking project which is conducted in the stands. It is a jute mill operation essentially, and I understand that some of the jute comes from San Quentin. There is much dust and lint and the workers have to wear masks to protect themselves. Incidentally, none of the issei can work on this project because of some international agreement at Geneva preventing it. But they get about 1800 or 2000 nisei volunteers to work in shifts. They are turning out 250 to 260 large camouflage nets daily, working an 8-hour shift. The nisei feel, and I agree with them, that if they are going to do essential defense work, and important defense work, they should be paid precisely what similar citizen defense workers are paid for the same type of work elsewhere and then perhaps charged for their support.

Incidentally, in the grandstands they have classes of all kinds which have been organized by the camp residents, including language

classes for the old ladies, etc. They have what seems to be a fairly good recreational program - wrestling, baseball, etc., with some 81 baseball teams. In the mornings the youngsters all meet in the central hall, they have a flag ceremony, and I understand the din is terrific.

As to attitudes, two statements can be made.

- a) The nisei unanimously feel that they are in the camps for the duration, and will not be released.
- b) None of the issei or the nisei have any thoughts whatever so far as the future is concerned. In other words, they are completely at a loss to envisage their own future.

There are 50 or 60 cases of mixed marriages in the camp, including the case of one red-headed Irishman married to a Japanese who fights and rows with the residents most of the time.

In summary I can say that visiting Santa Anita was a really terrific experience. You get a bewildering variety of conflicting impressions. The adaptability of the people, their tractability, is striking. You get the impression that they settled into camp life fairly well. The camp has assumed its own tempo and there is a good-natured general feeling about the camp which is reassuring. There are no barber shops and amateur barbers are at work in the streets in almost every street. Santa Anita is really one for the books.

(NOTE: Incidentally, Major Beasley told me that only a very few, a handful of troops, were at present involved in this entire operation, with an officers staff of 45 engaged primarily in civilian administrative jobs.)

Carey McWilliams
Los Angeles, Calif.

28F, Eighth Street
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Pomona, California
May 17, 1942

Dear Mr. McWilliams:

You may remember meeting me through Thelma Hechl at the Philharmonic. We just came back from supper at the mess hall, after standing in line an hour and a half and I felt I must write to someone who may be able to help us in our unhappy position. The incredible supper tonight consisted of a bowl of cold canned tomatoes, a scoop of rice and a bread custard pudding. We questioned the kitchen help and found that a Forrest Brown, chief steward, is responsible for the menu.

We are checking on a story that the steward is making 35 cents a day on each person served here. The allotment is 60 cents, so the story goes, and he actually spends only 25 cents per person for three meals, which latter at least isn't so hard to believe. Assuming there are 5,000 people in this camp that would be a \$1750 daily take. Incredible! but the thing is beginning to make sense. We couldn't believe the government would condone such diets as we've been on for the week that we've been here. Another sample menu--two cold, canned wieners, fancifully called Vienna sausages, Kellog's all-bran with canned milk, and coffee so weak we thought it was tea. It would make Paul de Kruif weep for his minimal diet for health. No whole wheat bread, no dairy products(milk only for children under ten) no citrus juices (one orange a week) no nuts, no adequate serving of lean meats.

After all, none of us asked to come here and if this move into camp was a "military necessity" we ought to be given decent, edible food or at the very least, the alternative of being allowed to buy the foods which will provide the vitamins that are deficient in the present diet. At this time when everyone is being urged to eat for health, please do not forget the political prisoners who are being neglected either because of graft or a genuine desire to keep the bills down.

Can you help us in any way? What effective procedure should we take? Should national attention be called through a publication like Time?

Well, it's helped me even to write this down. We hope our friends on the outside will act.

Most sincerely yours,

Hanna Okamura Kozasa