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SURVEY OF PUBLIC OPINION IN WESTERN STATES ON JAPANESE EVACUATION

NEW MEXICO

Period: March 1 to April 21, 1942

Source: Albuquerque Morning Journal

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War Relocation Authority
April 25, 1942

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War Relocation Authority
April 25, 1942

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NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque Morning Journal, March 1-April 21

SUMMARY

A. SUMMARY

I. Press attitude is generally more temperate than that of State and local officials and organized groups. Fairly consistent throughout check period.

II. State Officials consistent in vigorous opposition to any relocation program, except internment of Japanese, in the State. Considerable feeling, particularly against voluntary colonization. Some feeling of "if we have to take them, Federal government must take responsibility".

Governor continued to threaten use of emergency police powers, if necessary, to prevent colonization.

State officials consider matter of "dual citizenship" as possible means of dealing more summarily with Japs.

Local officials, police, reflect state attitude in general. No violence reported, but determined opposition and careful scrutiny of migrant Japanese. Isolated examples of anti-Japanese bans.

Educational groups not yet considering problem of accepting evacuated Jap students.

III. Civic groups, farm organizations generally opposed to colonization, reconciled to internment.

Labor groups have not given much consideration to problem.

IV. Individual opinion not much evidenced in press except by representatives of organized groups.

SURVEY OF PUBLIC OPINION IN WESTERN STATES ON JAPANESE EVACUATION

NEW MEXICO

B. SURVEY ANALYSIS

I. Pattern of Press Opinion (Albuquerque Journal) March 1 to April 21, 1942.

Much emphasis was being given, all through this period, to the fact that in relation to state populations, New Mexico had the largest percentage of boys in the Philippines. Several movements for "aid-to-Philippines" were begun in New Mexico, presumably by parents and relatives of New Mexico soldiers who appeared to be doomed to death or imprisonment. This unquestionably has affected anti-Japanese feeling in a state where pre-war Japanese population was very low--(only 186).

The fact that most of New Mexico had "open weather" during the check period enabled migrant Japanese to begin scouting for land in the State at an early date.

Earliest recognition of the Japanese situation in the New Mexico press, however, appear to have been in form of consideration of internment of dangerous aliens, inasmuch as an abandoned CCC camp at Santa Fe was found to be in process of reconditioning to accomodate an undetermined number of Japanese aliens.

In this connection, the earliest editorial comment during the period surveyed urged "put the Japs to work"--if they are to be interned they should be forced to do some work for their upkeep.

By March 3, however, the press as well as official political groups became aware that something more than mere internment was in the offing. In general, the editorial expression in New Mexico was much more temperate

than that of official and private groups. This was evidenced as early as March 3 by an editorial pointing out that this is war, and despite any local objections, the inland states should cooperate and fall in line with any plans for either internment or relocation of Japanese, as a matter of loyalty. It may be significant that this type of expression appeared simultaneously with the first official protest, when the governor joined other western governors in protesting to Representative John H. Tolan the removal of Japs to inland states.

Despite some awareness that colonization might be a problem to be faced, the immediate concern of the press in the early days of March was in terms of internment. On March 5 an editorial pointed out that New Mexico had "lined up" with the plan to intern Jap aliens and joined the governor in urging "strictest methods to guard prisoners and safeguard citizens of the state". The editorial continued, however, to point out that it would be impossible to find employment in the state for any numbers of Japanese, thus pointing toward the growing feeling against colonization plans.

Following expression of determined opposition by state officials to Japanese colonization, the Journal editorialized on March 6 stating that New Mexico will cooperate in taking its share of aliens but suggested that serious employment, social and racial problems would be created if Japanese colonization were permitted.

This feeling was given substance on March 7 in reflecting general opposition to the first major colonization proposal. An editorial on that date said "no" to the question of colonizing some 40,000 to 60,000 Japanese-Americans in the Maxwell area of northeastern New Mexico. This followed "almost unanimous opposition" to the proposal, presented by a "representative of Japanese interests"

to the governor and Chamber of Commerce officials in a Santa Fe conference on March 5.

The press kept in touch, primarily in its news columns, with the development of the internment camp at Santa Fe, and also with increasing numbers of small groups of Japanese driving through the city on their way to Colorado. Through news columns also, the Journal kept New Mexico readers well informed of the progress of the evacuation plans through stories issued from San Francisco and Los Angeles. No discrepancies or garbled information appeared to have been passed out in the handling of these headquarters stories, primarily AP releases.

That considerable interest was being taken in the Japanese question was evident. A feature story saying that Japanese in the Santa Fe internment camp had paid income tax, a statement from General Cardenas of Mexico that all aliens had been moved away from Mexico's western coast, reports of FBI activity in picking up dangerous aliens, a report that the relocation camps would be designed for permanence so they might be used for veterans' rehabilitation after the war, a story by a white farmer in Los Angeles minimizing the seriousness of the Jap evacuation to agriculture and saying that Mexican farm hands have done much of the work on Japanese farm lands, speculation on what might be the local political implications if the several thousand Japanese in Owens Valley were permitted to vote in county elections, a photo feature of Japanese in Los Angeles--all these were given considerable attention in Journal news columns.

Further evidence of moderate state press attitude appeared on March 24 in a reprinted editorial from the Carlsbad, N.M., Current Argus which said, in effect, that if the necessity should arise, the state might have to accept part of the evacuees as part of its wartime duty. Again on April 8, a Journal

editorial pointed out that New Mexico will have to lend "some degree of cooperation" to the government's Japanese evacuation program. And again on April 9, an editorial reprinted from the Las Vegas, N.M., Optic, said Japanese labor could be used to advantage on Colfax County farm lands. (This is the locale of the Maxwell land purchase proposal).

In late March a reprinted editorial from the weekly Deming Headlight was a notable exception to general moderate editorial tone in the State. This said in part--

" . . . Could we, us Deming citizens, look our soldiers in the eye after opening this community to the little brown men?"

On April 12, editorial mention was made of the governor's opposition to selling of land to Japanese and his determination to use his emergency police powers to prevent colonization. This was made, however, without appreciable editorial comment.

Further steps in the moderating editorial trend came on April 14. A Journal editorial attempted to point out both sides of the Maxwell land purchase controversy, stating that although there was opposition, at least 43 farmers were willing to sell that they claimed to have a right to sell, if they so desired. A second editorial on this date, reprinted from the Carlsbad, N.M., Current Argus, (notable for its temperate stand throughout) pointed out that somewhere, somebody has to make room for the Japanese, who as a matter of military necessity, have had to be moved away from the coastal areas. It suggested that perhaps New Mexico had a patriotic duty to take some of the Japanese and help watch them through the war.

This was the tone of editorials as the survey period ended. Not ended, however, was a careful reporting in news columns of the Maxwell land purchase

proposal. Last word of that appeared on April 18, stating that Japanese have an option on 9,000 acres of land in that area, at a minimum aggregate price of \$350,000. A first option had expired, and a second option, still held, added \$4 per acre for every acre plowed or planted if the option was exercised by May 4.

On April 21, the Journal gave prominence, on page one, to a story from WCCA headquarters in San Francisco, stating that more than two-thirds of the Japanese-operated farm lands in Arizona, California, Oregon and Washington have been transferred to other operators. The job is "over the hump", WCCA was quoted as saying. The transfer was said to have been most rapid in Arizona where 96.6% of the Japanese-held acreage was already in the hands of new operators. In Oregon the transfer was 80.7 percent complete; in California 69% complete, and in Washington 58.7 percent complete.

It is significant that the Salt Lake City meeting was not treated editorially but that in the survey period, some 56 individual news and editorial references were noted.

II. Attitude of Official Political Groups

At the state level, the governor (John E. Miles), the State Land Commissioner, (H. R. Rodgers), and a Justice of the State Supreme Court, (A. L. Zinn) were vociferously and determinedly opposed to any and all phases of Japanese relocation or colonization in the state. They were early reconciled to an internment camp--possibly because of an earlier experience, more than a year before, of internment of Nazi sailors at Fort Stanton, in Southern New Mexico. Much opposition had been raised to the establishment of the Nazi internment camp, but this had long since died down when the officials and people of the state found that the Federal government was able to keep the internees well in hand

and that the people and the state were not endangered by their presence.

Thus, it was only when the first talk came, in early March, of possible Japanese relocation that the state officials first began to raise vigorous opposition. Acting Governor Quintana, in the absence of Gov. John E. Miles, joined with other western governors in a protest to Rep. John H. Tolan. Upon his return Governor Miles offered cooperation of the state in plans for internment but made it clear that he wanted no Jap colonists in the state.

Real antagonism on the part of the official, political groups appears to have broken out first when L. E. Detwiler, a New York attorney variously represented as a liaison official between the Federal government and Japanese and later as merely a representative of Japanese interests, approached the governor and an assembly of civic groups with a plan to colonize several thousand Japanese in northeastern New Mexico in the vicinity of Maxwell.

Detwiler, dealing with an attorney of the Maxwell Farms and Livestock Co., secured an option to purchase 9,000 acres of Colfax County land, "subject to the approval of the War Department".

The governor, other state officials, and Chamber of Commerce representatives from leading New Mexico towns, immediately and vigorously opposed the proposed colonization. The State Land Commissioner, H. R. Rodgers, and a justice of the State Supreme Court, A. L. Zinn, joined the governor in early March in an organized attack on the proposal. Zinn propounded his belief that American born Japanese might be considered non-citizens because of their presumed continuing allegiance to the emperor of Japan. This was attacked, in turn, by C. R. McIntosh, attorney for the Maxwell Farms and Livestock Co., who claimed that the U. S. Supreme Court had ruled contrary to the view expressed by Zinn.

Zinn's opposition led to a verbal battle between himself and Under-

secretary of Interior, J. J. Dempsey, former New Mexico Congressman and a political figure in the State. Dempsey had advocated moderation in the attack on Japanese relocation until more consideration and understanding of the problem was had. Zinn's sharp criticism of Dempsey's attitude led Dempsey to modify his statements somewhat. On April 16 Dempsey told newsmen that he believed Pacific coast Japanese-Americans might be moved to Federal land in New Mexico if they were carefully guarded and "sent back where they came from after the war". "But," he added, "any American who would sell Japs an acre of New Mexico ground is a poor American".

At this juncture, there came a resolution from the State Board of Welfare requesting the governor and state officials to "give the Japanese colonization problem careful consideration and thorough study before it was approved."

Another development which began on March 18 and was noted in the New Mexico press was an invitation from Senator Stewart of Tennessee to western governors to a hearing in Washington to consider a bill which would authorize the arrest and detention of second generation Jap-Americans now considered citizens. It was not revealed in the Journal subsequently whether or not Governor Miles accepted this invitation.

New Mexico state officials and press were watching activities in adjacent states during this period. The Journal noted on March 22 that Governor Carr of Colorado had requested the Federal government to police any Japanese who should come into Colorado from the coast, saying that Colorado residents as well as the Japanese themselves must be protected. On March 23 Governor Carr warned a noisy crowd at a Durango, Colo., rally, that there must not be Japanese "incidents" in Colorado, lest retaliation against American prisoners in the Pacific result.

News notice only was given to the meeting of the governors in Salt Lake City. The Journal reported that four western governors had said the Federal government must be responsible for Japanese moved inland. Simultaneously, Governor Miles issued a statement saying that he would use his emergency police powers to curb Jap-American colonization in New Mexico.

Both Justice Zinn and State Land Commissioner Rodgers, as well as the governor himself, continued their stand through mid-April, there being no apparent change of attitude following the Salt Lake meeting and up to the end of the period surveyed.

Below the state level, and within official political groups, attitudes reflected those of the governor and the high state officers. City and state police checked the credentials of Japanese families traveling through the State, and were reported to be turning over to FBI any Japs who could not produce proper credentials. No untoward incidents were reported. As a matter of fact, on April 3, four Japanese families drove into Albuquerque to look for a farm on which to settle and live for the duration of the war. They were interviewed by newsmen and said they had not been mistreated and that they wanted to show that they were "true Americans."

Only one New Mexico mayor entered the news columns during the period. Mayor York Denton of Maxwell was quoted in an AP release on April 14 as saying that he had interviewed 43 farmers of the Maxwell irrigated tract and that they had expressed willingness to sell their land to Japanese. Among these was John S. Sheritt, president of the Maxwell Farm and Livestock Co., an owner of some 8700 acres.

On April 19, the Journal carried an AP release from Trinidad, Colorado, (not far north of the New Mexico state line) which described action of the Las Animas County (Colo.) commissioners who had voted a ban against settlement of Japs. They had instructed the sheriff to give 24-hour notice to move on to and Japanese entering the county.

The school question did not appear in the New Mexico press during the period surveyed.

III. Private Organization Attitudes

Attitudes of private, or non-official organizations including Chambers of Commerce, civic groups, livestock association, organized farmer groups, etc. played an important part in the consideration of the Japanese relocation program in New Mexico, as evidenced by the press.

Early in the story, as has been noted, Chambers of Commerce joined the governor and other state officials in opposing the Maxwell area land purchase proposal. At Las Cruces, the Chamber of Commerce received inquiries as to land which might be available for Japanese settlement and voted unanimously against any plan for colonizing Japanese in New Mexico and particularly in the Mesilla Valley (the lower Rio Grande valley between Elephant Butte Dam and El Paso, Texas). Again at Deming, N.M., the Chamber of Commerce and affiliated civic groups voted down a proposal by a Japanese representative to colonize some 2160 Japanese on about 18,740 acres which the Japanese offered to buy in that vicinity in late March. Although the land under consideration was absentee-owned by a California landlord, the Japanese delegation said they didn't want to come in unless the community approved.

A unique development within the period was action of the Tucumcari, N.M.,

Chamber of Commerce which on April 16 requested assistance from Senator Dennis Chavez in obtaining a Japanese "alien concentration camp" for that community. The senator "expressed surprise" and added: "In most sections nobody wants Jap camps."

At Maxwell, where the sharpest New Mexico colonization controversy raged, a mass meeting of local farmers was reported on April 7 to have protested Jap colonization. In Bernalillo County, the Journal's home county, the Farm Bureau on April 18 passed a resolution opposing any colonization there.

Livestock associations were reported, on March 6, to be opposed to Jap colonization.

Only one indirect labor attitude came to light in the survey, that being a statement by a U. S. Employment Service representative, on March 18, urging New Mexico employers not to refuse to hire aliens merely because they were aliens.

IV. Private Individuals

The only expression of opinion or attitude, reflected in the New Mexico press columns, other than from men clearly affiliated with state or local government or with organized groups, came in an open forum letter from an ex-chaplain of the National Guard. Capt. Milton A. Spotts, writing to the Albuquerque Tribune on about April 18, said:

"I join with the governor of our beloved state and others in saying that we do not want an oriental Jap settlement in our fair state to grab off the best agricultural lands regardless of what price they may be willing to pay for them. We do not want them now or later. We want our fertile lands for our own people and who are first entitled to them."

LIST OF PRESS CLIPPINGS.

Albuquerque Morning Journal.

- March 1 - p. 10 - Ed. "Put Japs To Work. (Internment of Aliens).
3 - p. 5 - AP, Seattle. N.M. Governor protests to Rep. Tolan.
3 - p. 6 - Ed. Inland states may have to help in Jap situation.
4 - p. 2 - A.P. San Francisco. Evacuation soon, says DeWitt.
5 - p. 1 - Reveal plan to colonize many Japs in Maxwell area.
5 - p. 1 - A.P. San Francisco Japs moving out of coastal areas.
5 - p. 3 - A.P. Santa Cruz - Fireworks possession causes seizure of Jap alien.
5 - p. 6 - Ed. N.M. lines up on plan to intern alien Japs.
6 - p. 12 - Ed. "Thumbs Down" on colonization. Predicts serious social, racial, employment problems.
7 - p. 6 - Ed. "No" is answer to Jap colonization proposal (Maxwell)
7 - p. 10 - Chambers of Commerce oppose plan to colonize Japs.
8 - p. 4 - A.P. Santa Fe - CCC Camp being reconditioned for aliens.
8 - p. - Twelve Japs go through on way to Colorado, credentials checked.
9 - p. 8 - A.P. Los Angeles. Clark announces evacuation plans.
10 - p. 5 - A.P. Magdalena Bay, Lower California - General Cardenas says aliens evacuated from Mexico west coast.
13 - p. 6 - A.P. Los Cruces, N.M. - C of C votes against Japs in Medilla Valley.
14 - p. 1 - A.P. Los Angeles. F.B.I. rounds up 200 Japs in southern Calif.
15 - p. 1 - A.P. Santa Fe - Japs arrive at internment camp.
p. 2 - Justice Zinn attacks Jap citizenship status.
p. 13 - More Japs go through city en route Colorado.
18 - p. 7 - A.P. Wash. D.C. - Sen. Stewart asks western governors to Jap bill hearing.

- March 18 - p. 12 - U.S. Employment Service re. asks consideration for aliens by N.M. employees.
- 19 - p. 1 - A.P. San Francisco. DeWitt announces first Jap evacuation move. Eisenhower named head of W.R.A.
- 20 - p. 2 - Senator Chavez voices strong criticism of any attempt to colonize Jap-Americans in states.
- 20 - p. 4 - Ed. Socorro Chieftain quoted - "Let us be careful that, in winning this fight, we are not left at home with the very things (intolerance and bigotry) we have sworn to eradicate elsewhere.
- p. 4 - Ed. Los Vegas Optic quoted - Says Undersecretary Dempsey accuses ~~Zinn~~ (Justice Supreme Court) and Gov. Miles, of opposing Jap colonization "not for patriotic reasons, but for selfish political reasons, seeking to draw public sentiment to them through hatred for the Japanese."
- 21 - P. 1 - A.P. Santa Fe Japs in internment camp pay income tax
- 22 - p. 11 - A.P. Denver - Gov. Carr asks U.S. to police Japs in Colo.
- 23 - p. 1 - A.P. San Francisco - Evacuation of Bainbridge Island, Puget Sound ordered for Mar. 30 by DeWitt.
- p. 7 - A.P. Durango, Colo. Gov. Carr warns against anti-Jap violence
- 24 - p. 2 - A.P. Los Angeles - New operation^{er} on Jap lands minimizes importance to agriculture of Jap evacuation.
- p. 3 - A.P. Los Angeles - 1000 Japs moved to Manzanar. 20,000 to go to Parker Dam area.
- p. 4 - Ed. (Carlsbad, N.M. Current Argus). State duty may be to help with Jap problem.
- 26 - p. 1 - A.P. Los Angeles. Political implications if Japs at Manzanar vote.
- 27 - p. 1 - Deming, N.M. Deming votes down colonization proposal
- Ed. Deming Headlight (see clipping file) (on or about this date) says: "How can we face returning soldiers if we let Japs into community."
- 29 - p. 5 - Photo - Jap family on last shopping tour in Los Angeles.
- 31 - p. - A.P. San Francisco. Evacuee pay will be held to \$21.

- April 2 - p. 3 - A.P. Los Angeles. 500 Japs moved to Manzanar.
- 3 - p. 13- Human interest feature on Jap families in Albuquerque looking for place to farm.
- 4 - p. 4- A.P. San Francisco - Conference of western governors called at Salt Lake City.
- 5 - P. 9 - Jap families in Albuquerque says have found place to farm.
- 6 - p. 7 - Jap-Americans reported scouting for lands in Rio Grande Valley.
- 7 - p. 1- A.P. Deming - Jap representative seeks colony near Deming.
- p. 1- A.P. Raton - Maxwell mass meeting protests Japs.
- p. 5- A.P. Santa Fe. State Attorney General goes to Salt Lake meeting
- 8 - p. 1- Santa Fe. Gov. Miles says police powers will be used to curb Jap-American colonization in N.M.
- p. 5- A.P. Salt Lake. 4 western Governors say U.S. must be responsible for Japs moved inland.
- p. 6- Ed. N.M. will have to lend "some degree of cooperation."
- 6 - p. 9- Ed. Los Vegas Optic - Need for using productive Jap labor on Colfax County farms.
- 10 - p. 2- A.P. Santa Fe. Justice Zinn urges civilian defense groups to oppose Jap colonization in state.
- 11 - p.11- A.P. Santa Fe - No state lands for Japs says Land Commissioner.
- 12 - p. 6- State Press column-Report governors stand against Japs.
- 13 - p. 8-A.P. Wash., D.C.-Possible suspension of foreign language press.
- 14 - p. 5-A.P. Santa Fe - Zinn - Dempsey controversy over colonization of Japs in N.M.
- 14 - p.10-INS-San Francisco. Bendetsen denies living conditions bad in camps
- 15 - p.8-4 A.P. Raton - Mayor Denton says 43 Maxwell farmers ready to sell lands to Japs.

April 16 - p. Undersecretary of Interior, J. J. Dempsey urges if Japs moved to N.M. they be guarded and sent back after the war.

16 - p. A.P. Santa Rosa (See Albuquerque Tribune Clipping in file) Tucumcari asks for Jap internment camp.

16 - p.6-Ed. Both sides of Maxwell colony controversy.

p. 6-Ed. (Carlsbad Current Argus) suggests patriotic duty to help with Jap situation.

17 - p.2- A.P. San Francisco - E.R. Fryer named WRA head. Announces 10,000 Japs to go to Gila River Indian reservation.

18 - p.1- Bernalillo County (N.M.)-Farm Bureau opposes any Jap settlement there.

- p.2- Japs have option on 9,000 acres in Maxwell area.

19 - p. 3-A.P. Trinidad, Colo.-Las Animas County commissioners vote ban against Jap settlement.

21 - p. 1-A.P. San Francisco - Two-thirds Jap operated farm lands in Arizona, California, Oregon & Washington already transferred to new operators.