

Japanese American Citizens League

An All American Organization of American Citizens

National Headquarters

National Headquarters Staff

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CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. Dillon S. Myer, National Director
War Relocation Authority
Barr Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Myer:

I must apologize for the tardiness of this confidential statement to you regarding the trouble in the centers. My excuse is (first) that I have been very ill and under a doctor's and a dentist's care for some time and (second) that I have attempted to obtain the thinking and collaboration of certain of our key people in the centers in order to give you a composite impression of our views. The enclosed report is one which combines our thinking as well as our recommendations, and I respectfully submit it to you for your consideration.

I trust that the lateness of this reply has not inconvenienced your committee too much.

In order that I may keep in close contact with the conditions in the centers, as well as the feelings of the people there, I plan to visit the various relocation centers before returning to Washington. It is my hope that at these meetings in the centers, I might not only talk with the membership of our organization, but also with the representatives of every group in the centers, and to gain from them a better idea of the over-all picture.

It is with this thought in mind that I request at this time permission to enter the relocation centers in Arizona and California. These four camps have been in operation longer than any of the centers in the "free zone". These four camps also seem to have more trouble than the others, and I would like to go and see if there is anything which can be done about them. Perhaps it might not be wise to visit Manzanar, but I do think that my visiting Poston, Gila, and Tule Lake may go far in clarifying the air. There are many who question the sincerity of the government, for example, in the resettlement program, and I believe that it will be worthwhile for me to



2. 1/14/43 Mr. Dillon S. Myer

discuss this important matter with the various center leaders involved.

If possible, I would like to visit the three centers in Arizona and California in the fore part of February, and, therefore, I would appreciate it if you would suggest the best procedure which might be followed in securing permission for me and a companion to enter the military area involved in order that we may visit the centers.

Once again, I apologize for the tardiness of this confidential statement, but trust that the considerations listed therein will merit your discussion. In all probability, they have already been advanced by your committee, but it will be interesting to check their findings and recommendations against those suggested by our group.

With kindest personal wishes to you and yours, I remain,

Cordially,

Mike Masaoka
National Secretary

JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE
National Headquarters

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CONFIDENTIAL STATEMENT

The problem of segregating "loyal to America" Japanese from those who are "loyal to Japan" in the ten relocation centers under the jurisdiction of the War Relocation Authority is a difficult one which is complicated by many factors.

To us, there is no question that immediate and summary action must be taken in order to assure those who are loyal to this country that un-American activities and utterances will not be tolerated by this government. On the other hand, as neither "free speech" nor "free assembly" should be abridged, some appropriate determination must be made where the legitimate bounds of our constitutional liberties end and subversiveness begin. Another difficult question is to determine whether these utterances and "uprisings" are honest attempts to improve, or call attention to, conditions within the center which certain residents feel need correction or improvement, or whether alleged conditions are merely excuses used by those who seek to arouse antagonism against our nation. Still another factor involves the matter of dealing with American citizens, with resident nationals, and with American citizens who are more thoroughly rooted in Japanese culture than even the resident nationals, all of whom are living together in an abnormal society.

That extreme caution should be exercised in carrying out any segregation policy is self-evident. Regardless of the method used, there are bound to be injustices: the problem is to keep these injustices at a minimum while accomplishing the purposes of segregation.

Before evacuation, we believe that most of the first generation Japanese nationals were at least passively loyal to the United States. After all, they had spent the greater part of their lives here, had made a living here which was far superior to that which they could have enjoyed in their native land, and had reared their children with the underlying idea that America would be equally "good" to them. As for the American Japanese, we believe that, previous to the exclusion orders, practically all of them were one hundred per cent Americans. Most of them never thought of themselves as anything but Americans equal to any other American.

It is because of their "faith" in American principles and justice that both the first and second generation Japanese, alien and citizen alike, are so confused and bewildered. The very foundations of their thinking have been torn away. It must be admitted that, while the army and the WRA handled the evacuation processes with expertness and dispatch, the very "shock" of being uprooted and being forced to live under conditions which are far from ideal have created fertile fields for axis propaganda.

While most of the population is made up of American born citizens, the older members of the communities are so-called "enemy aliens." These people cannot become citizens of the United States. Their treatment, according to those who desire to view it in this manner, is worse than that accorded to other "enemy aliens." Their children, who are citizens, are classified as being more suspicious than the "enemy aliens" of other powers. All of this is a case of downright discrimination based upon race and only Japan's military victory will restore to them the dignity which is rightfully theirs. We believe that it is confinement which influences so many to look toward Japan.

We have heard reports, for example, that at one o'clock every morning, a number of Japanese residents gather at secret meeting places to hear special short wave

broadcasts from Japan. We have heard, too, that the Japanese government maintains a short wave transmitting station at Kiska, Alaska, from which they periodically broadcast instructions to their agents in the relocation centers. Another report is that certain Japanese have constructed efficient and easily hidden short wave receiving sets from bamboo.

It is our considered judgment, however, that most of the Japan-born still retain a high regard for this country, especially those with children. We believe that this group can be easily "re-converted" to aggressive Americanism provided that they are made to feel that the American government is interested in their welfare and their protection.

As for the American-born Japanese, we believe that many are so disillusioned and "hurt" that they fall easy prey to those who are intent on adding to their confusion. They had been told by their friends, taught in their schools, and convinced in their minds that American citizenship meant something, even in times of war. Neither they nor their friends could conceive of "evacuation" for one segment of American citizens while the enemy aliens of other powers were permitted to reside in the area from which they had been "excluded." Certainly, they never anticipated being bracketed as persons "more potentially dangerous" than the enemy alien nationals of Germany, and, until recently, Italy. All this tends to color their thinking and their reactions.

In spite of this, however, it is our reasoned opinion that the great majority of the American-born Japanese are at least passively loyal to the United States today. Most of them have never been to Japan, and don't want to go there. Although some may speak in bitter tones of denunciation, many more live in the hope that their faith will be justified. If these Americans with Japanese faces can be made to realize that they have a definite stake here in America, we confidently predict that no finer citizens can be found elsewhere.

Granting for the moment that some method of segregation is devised, it should not be a difficult task to specially confine nationals of Japan, for they are "enemy aliens," but to provide further segregation and confinement for American citizens may pose constitutional questions above and beyond those involved in the military evacuation. Unless their activities and words come within the scope of the sedition laws, it may be troublesome to attempt to segregate citizens from other citizens.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, it seems imperative to us that immediate action should be taken in every center to "pull out" those who are constantly agitating against this government or its representatives, or fomenting dissension and violence. The people in the center must be convinced beyond all doubt that the government means to protect the loyal and to enforce law and order at all times and for all persons.

A review of the case history of agitation in Manzanar and Poston reveals that some of the responsibility for this condition may be traced to the indecisive and "overlooking" attitude of the project administrators. When certain persons discouraged working on various projects, or advocated un-American doctrines, or suggested pro-Japan policies, and the like, the administrators generally refused to take swift and summary action but actually "leaned over backwards," as the expression goes, in their treatment of the guilty parties. This attitude can be traced to the laudable one of "appreciating" the tremendously difficult task of readjustment which faced the evacuees and of attempting to grant them every possible right and privilege to compensate for their sacrifices in the evacuation. This "lenient" policy which was applied time and time again caused the agitators to believe that they would not be punished for

their overt acts, and that the project administrators would not harm them in any way (as witness the refusal of the Manzanar mob to obey the command to "halt" in their advance on the military police). It is our conclusion that, had summary and drastic action been taken in each case to make an example of the offender, the outbreaks of lawlessness would never have occurred.

Although the situation is well advanced in most of the centers, we believe that immediate action should be taken whereby, without warning or hearing, known agitators and troublemakers are moved out of the relocation centers and placed in special camps of their own. It is our understanding that the minutes of many of the community meetings record those who are most prominent in un-American agitation and demands. The general community feeling, too, is that certain well-known persons are constant offenders. These persons, though they may be few in number, ought to be removed immediately. We believe that, should they be forewarned of their approaching segregation, they would either create a militant sentiment against their removal or organize to resist it. Too, if hearings are provided, they might raise the cry that they were unjustly accused and tried, that they were "framed", etc. In order to avoid such arrangements and charges, we suggest that the WRA, upon completion of their investigation, should segregate summarily all those whom they feel are dangerous to the "internal security" of the centers. Once these few leading troublemakers are segregated and isolated, we are hopeful that the "pressure" will be off of the loyal elements and that law and order will rule.

Our latest reports indicate that those who are causing most of the trouble are usually single men without any "vested interests" left in the United States, certain of the "returned" internees of the Department of Justice who allegedly made their plans for causing trouble in the interment camps, professional gamblers, and pro-Japan Kibei. Bachelors who were either migratory laborers or small businessmen who lost everything in the evacuation feel that they have nothing to lose and everything to gain by a Japanese victory. Stories are circulated both within the relocation centers and in the "free zones" to the effect that internees planned certain outbreaks with their colleagues while confined by the Department of Justice. Professional gamblers, and especially those connected with the notorious Toyo Club, which operated in every large Japanese community, are claimed members of the secret Black Dragon Society and are pledged to destroy the United States. Pro-Japan Kibei have been so indoctrinated with Japanese nationalism that they feel that they have a divine mission to fulfill. These are the more prominent types of agitators and habitual grumblers.

In view of the fact that practically every person who has been "beaten up" in the centers is a member of our Japanese American Citizens League, many of our members have written in suggesting that our organization create special "gangs" for the protection of our own membership. They feel that strong-arm tactics should be met with the same kind of measures, as the government seems unwilling or unable to cope with this situation. Naturally, we have strongly disapproved such methods which borders on "taking the law" into their own hands. We have asked them to send in their suggestions to curb the alarming growth of gangsterism in the centers.

The unanimous consensus of opinion is that the WRA ought to take immediate steps to segregate the known agitators. Most of our chapter leaders have signified their willingness to name those whom they consider inimical to center welfare if their own names are not revealed. The names which they might submit could be checked with others who are reliable and who are not members of the JACL in order to insure against possible prejudices simply because of organizational differences.

The question was asked by all the centers as to why the known grumblers and troublemakers were not removed since it was their understanding that the WRA intended to follow that procedure after the Manzanar incidents. One person wrote that many residents are losing faith in the WRA because they have not done something to prevent a repetition of the Poston and Manzanar troubles. We believe that the WRA is doing something, but we urge haste and decisive action.

The JACL leaders who replied to our queries all were of the opinion that the "fence-sitters", who constitute the majority of every center, would "back" such a step by the federal government. Everyone is now waiting to see whether the WRA "dare" take drastic action against the pro-axis elements.

The first step, then, as we see it, is to remove all the known agitators and troublemakers.

The second step is, we believe, to invite all persons, citizens and aliens alike, who desire repatriation to Japan either as exchange prisoners or deportees after the war, to declare their intentions in writing. These people should be moved to another special camp reserved just for people like themselves. We do not feel that they should be arbitrarily placed in the same camp as the criminals who are to be segregated in the initial movement. These people should be informed that they will be treated without prejudice or favor, but that they will not be eligible for resettlement under the WRA regulations.

While this group may not cause trouble to the government, their very presence and attitude within the centers contribute to a general feeling of antagonism and ill will.

The third step, we believe, is to place men who are trained investigators, such as FBI, Military, or Naval Intelligence agents, in the centers in some administrative capacity which will permit them to ferret out those who are disloyal and to arrive at some satisfactory arbitrary method of mass segregation, if that is necessary. We believe, too, that American citizens of Japanese ancestry of unquestioned loyalty should be trained in investigative methods and that these people should be delegated with the jobs of cooperating with the government in "searching" out those who are pro-Japan in their sentiments or who are troublemakers. There is no question that those with Japanese characteristics, if they can be made available, will be able to discover many facts which a non-Japanese might not be able to.

We are not suggesting a reign of terror, or a witch hunt. We are merely calling for the same type of specialized investigation to prevent sabotage and espionage within the centers as that which is carried on on the outside.

The fourth step, we believe, is that people trained in administrative police and detective work be placed in charge of the internal security departments and that these administrators be more cautious in the selection of their departmental personnel. One complaint which we receive is that the men generally in charge of internal security are not men skilled and experienced in police work. Their apparent youth, in most cases, does not inspire the confidence of the residents and inept questioning of accused law violators attests to their inexperience.

Our reports suggest that some of the personnel of the internal security departments are not generally well-accepted persons who were known for their exemplary citizenship before evacuation. In some centers, Kibei of doubtful loyalty, or judo experts (Japanese-style wrestlers), or pre-evacuation rowdies are members of the internal security division.

We believe that the four steps suggested will go a long way toward solving the problem of "mob violence" in the centers: (1) the immediate apprehension and removal of known troublemakers, (2) the segregation of those who desire repatriation to Japan, (3) the placing of trained investigators within the centers to ferret out those who are disloyal, and (4) the selection of experienced internal security administrators and more careful appointment of departmental personnel.

In order to avoid injustices to those who might be among those segregated, perhaps some type of special hearing might be arranged after their apprehension and isolation. This board should be in the nature of an investigative one, rather than one concerned with the known or alleged facts. It might be composed of single representatives from the WRA, the War Department, and the Department of Justice, in addition to two civilian members. It is my understanding that by having members of the War and Justice Departments on the board, the records of the Military Intelligence and the Federal Bureau of Investigation are made available. This investigation of those specially confined should not only include their record and background previous to evacuation but also their conduct in the assembly and relocation centers. It is quite possible that persons who were loyal to the United States may have changed their allegiances since their military removal.

It is our faith that there are only a comparatively few persons in each center who instigate the difficulties. If these few persons are removed, and the people are convinced that the government will act swiftly in dealing with others who might attempt to "take the place" of those removed, we believe that segregation will have a salutary effect upon the centers.

If the above will not solve the difficulties, perhaps some system of arbitrary segregation such as the one suggested by Lieutenant-Commander Kenneth E. Ringle of the Naval Intelligence would have to be adopted. If this step is necessary, the trained investigators working in the centers might be able to arrive at some method of mass segregation which would not cause too much injustice and alienate the loyalties of those who are loyal to this country.

While we are anxious to prevent any incidents comparable to those which occurred in Poston and Manzanar, we wish to emphasize again the necessity for extreme care and caution in any policy of segregation. The inherent dangers of any segregation policy are magnified here because of the temper and "make-up" of the people in the relocation centers. Nevertheless, the government, through the WRA, must take a firm stand and act accordingly in order to preserve confidence in the United States, as well as in law and order generally.

We of the Japanese American Citizens League stand ready to cooperate in every way possible. We would appreciate your calling to our attention the services which we may render.

We are enclosing a number of bulletins in the hope that they will prove of some value.

Respectfully submitted,

JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

Mike Masacka

MIKE MASACKA

National Secretary