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RESISTANCES TO RESETTLEMENT

By MORRIS OPLER

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The motivations underlying the reluctance of many of those of Japanese ancestry to leave the Relocation Centers to which they were evacuated and to resettle in areas open to them are many and complicated. In a short paper only the more general and important of these can be briefly discussed. For convenience the factors particularly significant in the thinking of the alien elders will be treated first.

Anyone who has dealt directly with the problem of relocation knows that one of the most serious obstacles the program confronts relates to age. The Japanese immigrants who came as young men to this country between 1900 and 1910 have grown old. Seventy percent of the alien males are now 50 years of age or older. They are at an age when it is most difficult to absorb the psychological shock of the financial reverses evacuation has entailed. They are at an age when they feel but limited hope that they can reestablish themselves in a new venture and in an unfamiliar locality. Many of these men are no longer robust. Their years of immigrant toil and hardship have taken a toll.

A powerful deterrent to the resettlement of the older people is their fear of mistreatment. Since they were prevented by law from naturalizing they must go forth as enemy aliens. They know that an enemy alien in time of war has limited rights, and they fear any change of government policy or popular feeling that might operate against them. At the time of evacuation they were told by highly placed officials that removal was in large measure for their own protection, to prevent possible violence to them. Those who took the the argument of protective custody seriously are unable to throw off its influence at a signal. They are unable to believe that white Americans who live on one side of an arbitrary geographical line are fundamentally different from those who live on the opposite side; that those who live on one side will offer them violence while those who live on the other side will great them as friends.

Another negative factor in the situation is the fear of loneliness. Most of the aliens agree that at this time only dispersal over a wide area will save them from unfavorable comment and attention. But each hesitates to take the step which will place him among the first to resettle according to this pattern. Because of his political and spacial segregation, because of his linguistic handicap, the average alien's contacts and social life centered around the Japanese community. The local branch of the Japanese Association, the prefectural organization, and similar soceties made possible his recreational life. He now fears the lack of a type of community life that made life bearable in a land which offered him few social opportunities. Moreover, most of the elders are Buddhists, and they see their religious life disintegrating as a result of a new dispersion.

A large number of aliens are men who long ago "served time" as railroad workers, miners or agricultural workers and finally became fishermen, independent farmers, flower growers, retail produce merchants, restaurant or hotel operators, and the like. Ownership of their own businesses or enterprises has been a mark of success and a badge of pride to these men. They dread to return to their former work status. During the years since they rose from the ranks of "hired men," most of them have raised families and have undertaken obligations commensurate with their rise in station. Apart from the humiliation and the distaste for working for those who may not understand them, they doubt that they can support their families on the old basis. Yet they believe that the prospect for acquiring land or establishing businesses is anything but bright. Many of their stores depended on the Japanese community for patronage. The hazards of setting up a new establishment in a strange place are not underestimated; the difficulties of obtaining merchandize during war time are considered. Farmers have lost or sold irreplaceable equipment. They have heard that they will be accepted as agricultural workers but that any attempt to acquire or even to lease land is likely to end in resistance to their presence in a locality. They are used to irrigation farming and to the intensive production of one or two specialized crops. The difference in soil, climate and farming methods in other parts of the country causes them to deliberate long before acting.

Then there are those who have property or business interests in California and who can see no logic in trying to make an adjustment at a difficult time to a place other than the one in which their possessions and interests are and where they would not stay for more than a limited time.

To this may be added the feeling of insecurity concerning the future prospects of their group in this country which depresses a section of the aliens. The newspapers they see are from the West Coast and these fill them with foreboding. With a bad press and discriminatory legislation pending they hesitate to risk remaining capital. Even those who are confident that they could make their way on the outside if present public attitudes persist are sobered by the uncertainties of the coming months. A long Pacific war may very well give occasion for other atrocity stories, and, with the fiercest fighting and longest casualty lists ahead, the public temper may change sharply for the worse, they say.

Moreover, there exists the feeling among a certain proportion of the aliens that by its relocation program the government is attempting to shift the burden of their maintenance entirely and unfairly upon their shoulders. It is their claim that when the government forced them to close their businesses and leave their homes they understood that they were being taken to a "duration" home where their needs would be taken care of until they could resume life where it had been interrupted. These individuals take the position that they are in reality interned. Their stand has fostered the rumor or the impression that the government cannot be held responsible for the losses incurred as a result of evacuation of those who resettle and

thus show a willingness and ability to maintain themselves without government sponsorship. Another offshoot of this feeling that the government is trying to shirk its responsibility is the determination of some to postpone resettlement until and unless a generous lump sum is forthcoming which can act at once as restitution and as a stake with which rehabilitation may be attempted.

Since the aliens are family heads, unwilling to be separated long from their immediate kin, their resettlement means *family relocation*. Where jobs are plentiful, housing conditions are likely to be unfavorable. Single individuals can usually manage to find a room or to "double up" with a friend but the housing problem, always difficult at best for Orientals, is seen as an insurmountable obstacle by many family men. Some reach the conclusion that while housing accommodations in the Centers are anything but luxurious, they at least exist and should not be lightly left unless something else is guaranteed. Family heads, too, are disturbed by the tales of high taxes, and high prices for rent and food. They end by wondering if they will be able to support their families after resettlement in spite of the larger income, whether they actually will be better off financially on the outside, or whether the only real additions will be cares and responsibilities.

Akin to the concern over housing is the worry over the shortage in medical and dental service which evacuees hear exists on the outside. The ordeal of evacuation has left many of the older people with a health anxiety, a consciousness of age and debility, and they shrink from leaving the Centers where these services are freely available for localities where they are hard to obtain at all.

Serious, too, is an apathy born of disillusionment. This is common among some who were making plans for voluntary evacuation when freezing orders went into effect or who had gone through the trouble and expenses of removing to the unrestricted or "white" zone when it suddenly was declared a restricted zone. Many of these people had initiated or had considered plans for a new life elsewhere. Their one dread was the specter of being forced into an Assembly Center or a Relocation Center. Even when this occurred they clung to the hope that they would be in a Center for only the few days which a routine check would necessitate and they went forward with their negotiations and their plans. Some of these plans involved substantial groups of people, liberal amounts of capital and ambitious farming operations.

But the W.C.C.A. was at this time primarily involved in the difficult task of establishing and maintaining the Centers and did not concern itself with relocation. Policy in regard to resettlement was formulated slowly. Even under W.R.A. it was months before a leave clearance and release procedure was worked out and it was the fall of 1942 before a trickle of evacuees began to leave the Centers for resettlement elsewhere. During this period many who were at first most avid to leave saw their co-planners

scattered, their assets reduced and their equipment lost. They settled back into a cynicism and apathy from which it is hard to rouse them.

During the first days of the Centers, when evacuees were appalled at their isolation, their drabness and their discomfort, a small inducement toward resettlement might have had a magic effect. But two years have passed since evacuation. The bare rooms of the barracks have been reasonably comfortably furnished. Lawns, trees, flower beds and gardens have been planted. Athletic fields have been constructed. Leisure time activities have been organized. Clubs and recreational facilities for persons of all age groups have sprung up. Schools, libraries and churches are functioning smoothly. Friendships have been formed. People have settled in. And with the existence of war-time dislocations in housing, transportation and nearly all other aspects of life on the outside, it is easy for evacuees, particularly for those who are older, to rationalize, to accept what they have and to resolve to stay where they are.

A final and somewhat amusing factor that might be mentioned is that of local patriotism. In spite of all that has happened there are evacuees who talk like Chamber of Commerce functionaries from Southern California. They like the West Coast, and particularly California. They speak enthusiastically about its climate and its products. Other sections of the country are too cold or too wet. Some of these people are determined to wait until they can live again in the place which they insist has the best climate in the world.

If the alien parents are deterred from resettlement by considerations of age, their citizen children are prevented in many instances by the factor of youth. The Japanese immigrant ordinarily came to this country as a young man. He worked for several years before he sent for a bride or returned to Japan to marry. In average the alien wife is 7 years younger than her husband. And because the man usually deferred marriage until he felt he could provide for a wife and family, there is a wide gap between the generations. The children are disproportionately young compared to the age of the parents.

As a result most of the members of the second generation were school children at the time of evacuation. The work experience they had known was largely on a part-time basis and related to family enterprises. Many of them feel untried and inadequate to the impressive jobs on the outside. Where the parents do not wish to resettle, it takes considerable courage for the young person to take the step alone and without the protection of family and home. Even where the child is anxious to travel eastward, the parents often object. They insist that the child is too young or they fear for the morals of an unmarried daughter. They point to their own age and loneliness and ask their children not to leave them at a time when they have suffered such overwhelming reverses. Thus loyalty to parents and family solidarity often keep in the Center young people who could resettle with

every chance of success. Other motivations, such as the fear of discrimination, worry over possible unemployment when soldiers return, housing shortage, etc. are also significant in the thinking of the young as well as the old people and have a paralyzing effect.

If time permitted much more might be said about the factors underlying resistance to relocation on the part of both aliens and citizens. However, a sufficient number of the elements involved have been listed to indicate that any successful relocation program must be geared to counteract these major practical and psychological barriers.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to review the mechanics and development of the relocation program. But it should be noted that it is a vast undertaking, sensitive to the complex problems and questions which must be faced and answered. For example, W.R.A. maintains regional offices which find job possibilities for evacuees and inform the Centers of job offers. These offices also try to find housing accommodations for evacuees. If health or emergency conditions make an evacuee's return to the Center necessary, the regional office arranges the details. By working with groups sympathetic to evacuees and the resettlement program, these regional offices seek to better public relations and create a friendly sentiment toward the resettlers. W.R.A. pays for the transportation and maintenance en route of those whose cash assets are so low that they could not otherwise relocate. It provides maintenance that cares for such resettlers until they can get on the job and receive pay. It provides for the transportation of their personal baggage and belongings. It will ship their tools of trade, up to the weight of 5,000 pounds, to the point where they will be used. It has arranged with the Social Security Board to provide emergency aid for relocatees who fall ill or find themselves in sudden difficulties. It permits the return to Centers of those who for good reason cannot maintain themselves on the outside and of the families of soldiers. A vocational training and retraining program has been inaugurated for those who would benefit by it. Adult English classes help the aliens to overcome the linguistic handicaps.

W.R.A. also allows short term leaves so that those who are faint of heart or poor in cash reserves may make full psychological and practical adjustments before finally resettling. It combats the inflated notions about food prices, taxes, rationing and other alleged horrors by pamphlets which soberly recite the facts about living costs and job opportunities in specific areas. The relocation program is growing and is changing in detail if not in direction in response to understanding and experience. And it is consequently enjoying an ever-increasing measure of success.

REPORT OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY SECTION MEETING

Prepared by GEORGE SABAGH

California State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission

The respective roles of economic depressions and of organized political pressure groups in accentuating racial tensions were discussed at length. It was pointed out that tensions were