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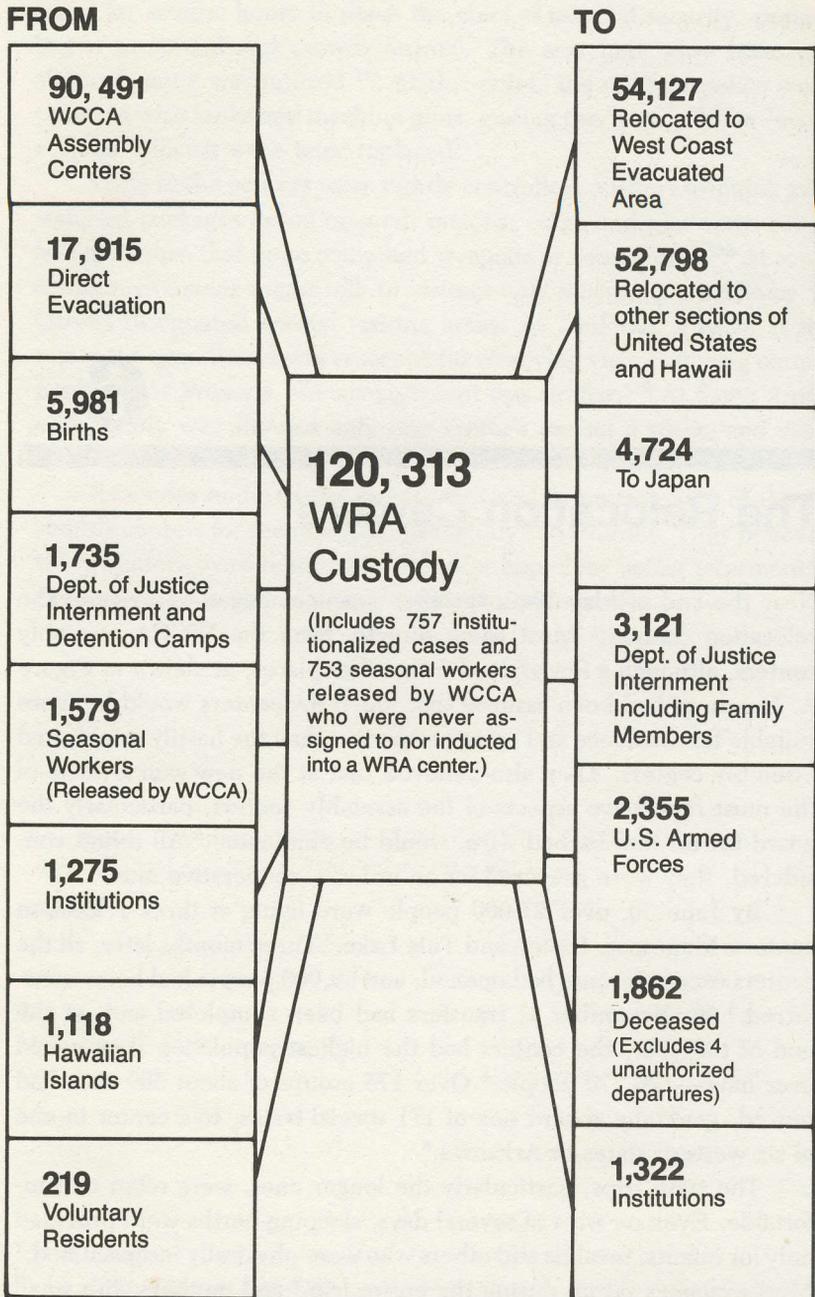
The Relocation Centers

Near the end of May 1942, the first evacuees began to arrive at the relocation centers.¹ Most came directly from the WCCA assembly centers, although a few arrived from other places, as shown in Figure A. Evacuees had been assured that the WRA centers would be more suitable for residence and more permanent than the hastily established assembly centers. They also believed that at the new camps some of the most repressive aspects of the assembly centers, particularly the guard towers and barbed wire, would be eliminated.² All things considered, they were prepared for an orderly, cooperative move.

By June 30, over 27,000 people were living at three relocation centers: Manzanar, Poston and Tule Lake.³ Three months later, all the centers except Jerome had opened, and 90,000 people had been transferred.⁴ By November 1, transfers had been completed and, at the end of the year, the centers had the highest population they would ever have—106,770 people.⁵ Over 175 groups of about 500 each had moved, generally aboard one of 171 special trains, to a center in one of six western states or Arkansas.⁶

The train trips, particularly the longer ones, were often uncomfortable. Even on trips of several days, sleeping berths were provided only for infants, invalids and others who were physically incapacitated.⁷ Most evacuees sat up during the entire trip,⁸ and mothers with small children who were allowed berths were separated from their husbands.⁹ Ventilation was poor because the military had ordered that the

FIGURE A: The Evacuated People



Source: U.S. Department of the Interior, WRA, *The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description* (1946), p. 8.

shades be drawn.¹⁰ The toilets sometimes flooded, soaking suitcases and belongings on the floor.¹¹ The trips were slow because the trains were old, and sometimes they were shunted to sidings while higher-priority trains passed. Delays could be as long as ten hours.¹² Although the WCCA reported that it had made provision for meals on the trains,¹³ these arrangements were not always satisfactory.¹⁴ Medical care was sometimes poor; although the WCCA had ordered that trains be stopped and ailing evacuees hospitalized along the route,¹⁵ two evacuees testified about separate incidents of infants dying during the journeys.¹⁶

The military guards harassed some evacuees.¹⁷ Two testified about their experiences:

When we finally reached our destination, four of us men were ordered by the military personnel carrying guns to follow them. We were directed to unload the pile of evacuees' belongings from the boxcars to the semi-trailer truck to be transported to the concentration camp. During the interim, after filling one trailer-truck and waiting for the next to arrive, we were hot and sweaty and sitting, trying to conserve our energy, when one of the military guards standing with his gun, suggested that one of us should get a drink of water at the nearby water faucet and try and make a run for it so he could get some target practice.¹⁸

The second evacuee reported:

At Parker, Arizona, we were transferred to buses. With baggage and carryalls hanging from my arm, I was contemplating what I could leave behind, since my husband was not allowed to come to my aid. A soldier said, "Let me help you, put your arm out." He proceeded to pile everything on my arm. And to my horror, he placed my two-month-old baby on top of the stack. He then pushed me with the butt of the gun and told me to get off the train, knowing when I stepped off the train my baby would fall to the ground. I refused. But he kept prodding and ordering me to move. I will always be thankful [that] a lieutenant checking the cars came upon us. He took the baby down, gave her to me, and then ordered the soldier to carry all our belongings to the bus and see that I was seated and then report back to him.¹⁹

At the end of these long train and bus rides were the new centers and the "intake" procedure, which usually took about two hours.²⁰ Leighton described the process at Poston:

They begin to file out of the bus, clutching tightly to children and bundles. Military Police escorts anxiously help and guides direct them in English and Japanese. They are sent into the mess halls where girls hand them ice water, salt tablets and wet towels. In the back are cots where those who faint can be stretched out, and the cots are usually occupied. At long tables sit interviewers sug-

gesting enlistment in the War Relocation Work Corps. . . . Men and women, still sweating, holding on to children and bundles, try to think. . . . Interviewers ask some questions about former occupations so that cooks and other types of workers much needed in the camp can be quickly secured. Finally, fingerprints are made and the evacuees troop out across an open space and into another hall for housing allotment, registration and a cursory physical examination. . . . In the end, the evacuees are loaded onto trucks along with their hand baggage and driven to their new quarters.

“Intake” was a focus of interest and solicitude on the part of the administrative staff. The Project Director said it was one of the things he would remember longest out of the whole experience at Poston. He thought the people looked lost, not knowing what to do or what to think.²¹

It was not an auspicious introduction to the War Relocation Authority.

THE WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

When evacuees stepped off the buses and began the “intake” procedures, they left Army jurisdiction and came into the custody of a new agency, the War Relocation Authority (WRA). Three months before, the WRA had been created on March 18, 1942, by Executive Order 9102, to

formulate and effectuate a program for the removal, from [designated areas] of the persons or classes of persons designated . . . and for their relocation, maintenance, and supervision.

To carry out this function, the Director was to

provide for the relocation of such persons in appropriate places, provide for their needs in such manner as may be appropriate, supervise their activities . . . provide . . . for employment . . . prescribe the terms and conditions of such employment.²²

On the same day, President Roosevelt had appointed as the WRA’s first director Milton Eisenhower, brother of the general, who had previously served as an official in the Department of Agriculture. By his own account, Eisenhower knew little about the West Coast ethnic Japanese, the deliberations that had preceded the decision to evacuate them, or future plans for the evacuees.²³ He faced a mammoth task—building an agency to direct and supervise the lives of over 100,000 people and, at the same time, deciding what to do with them. He

quickly concluded that the evacuation would eventually be viewed as "avoidable injustice."²⁴

Eisenhower faced an initial decision that would shape the rest of the WRA program—would the evacuees be resettled and placed in new homes and jobs, or would they be detained, confined and supervised for the duration of the war? He had been given almost no guidance on this crucial matter. Beyond the fact that the military would deliver the evacuees to the WRA and thereafter wished no further part in the "Japanese problem," nothing had been decided.

The Tolan Committee had reported this major deficiency in planning in March:

To date the committee has been unable to secure from anyone charged with responsibility a clear-cut statement of the status of the Japanese evacuees, alien or citizen, after they pass through the reception center.²⁵

They also offered some guidance. The Committee was firmly opposed to incarcerating the evacuees for reasons that proved remarkably prophetic:

The incarceration of the Japanese for the duration of the war can only end in wholesale deportation. The maintenance of all Japanese, alien and citizen, in enforced idleness will prove not only a costly waste of the taxpayers' money, but it automatically implies deportation, since we cannot expect this group to be loyal to our Government or sympathetic to our way of life thereafter.

Serious constitutional questions are raised by the forced detention of citizens against whom no individual charges are lodged.²⁶

Instead, they favored a loyalty review at the assembly centers:

Presumably, the loyalty and dependability of all Japanese, alien and citizen alike, would be examined at the reception center. This would be followed by arrangements for job placement outside of the prohibited areas of all persons certified.²⁷

Only when this process failed to resolve all questions did the Committee envision the creation of resettlement communities.

Eisenhower and his lieutenants started from premises much like those of the Tolan report; they believed that the vast majority of evacuees were law-abiding and loyal and that, once out of the combat zone, *they should be returned quickly to conditions approximating normal life*. Believing WRA's goal should be to achieve this rehabilitative measure, they immediately devised a plan to move evacuees to the intermountain states.²⁸ The government would operate "reception centers" and some evacuees would work within them, developing the land and farming. Many more, however, would work outside the centers,

in private employment—manufacturing, farming or creating new self-supporting communities.²⁹

Mike Masaoka, National Secretary of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), soon approached Eisenhower with a lengthy letter setting out recommendations and suggestions for policies the WRA should follow. This effort was grounded on the basic position the JACL had taken on exclusion and evacuation:

We have not contested the right of the military to order this movement, even though it meant leaving all that we hold dear and sacred, because we believe that cooperation on our part will mean a reciprocal cooperation on the part of the government.

Among the letter's many specific recommendations was the plea that the government permit Japanese Americans to have as much contact as possible with white Americans to avoid isolation and segregation.³⁰

The WRA's own plans were in sympathy with such an approach, but the government's experience with voluntary relocation suggested that the WRA would only be successful if it could enlist the help of the interior state governors.³¹ WRA arranged a meeting for officials of the ten western states for April 7 in Salt Lake City, the day after Masaoka had sent Eisenhower his appeal for a cooperative relationship with the government. From the federal side, the two principal representatives were Bendetsen and Eisenhower; from the states came five governors and a host of other officials, as well as a few farmers who were anxious to employ evacuees for harvesting.

Bendetsen made the first presentation, describing the evacuation and the WDC's reasons for it. He argued that, although some evacuees might be disloyal, once they were removed from the West Coast, the danger would be minimal. There were two real problems, as he saw it: possible fifth column activity in the event of an invasion and the possibility of confusing the Japanese Americans with the enemy; both problems were peculiar to the West Coast. Eisenhower then described his planned program. He assured state participants that security precautions would be taken. Evacuees would not be permitted to own land against the wishes of the state, and the WRA would insure that evacuees did not become permanent residents. He played down the portions of the plan involving private employment.

The governors of the mountain states fully grasped the politics of the situation, and they were unimpressed by both Bendetsen's sophistry and Eisenhower's social engineering. They opposed any evacuee land purchase or settlement in their states and wanted guarantees that the government would forbid evacuees to buy land and that it

would remove them at the end of the war. They objected to California using the interior states as a "dumping ground" for a California "problem." People in their states were so bitter over the voluntary evacuation, they said, that unguarded evacuees would face physical danger.

Governor Herbert Maw of Utah put forth a plan whereby the states would run the relocation program with federal financing. Each state would be given a quota of evacuees for which it "would hire the state guards, and would set up camps of Japanese and would work them under general policies and plans specified by the Federal government." The evacuees could not be allowed to roam at large, said Maw, citing strategic works in Utah. Accusing the WRA of being too concerned about the constitutional rights of Japanese American citizens, he suggested that the Constitution could be changed.

The Governor of Idaho agreed with Maw and advocated rounding up and supervising all those who had already entered his state. Idaho, he said, had as many strategic works as California. The Governor of Wyoming wanted evacuees put in "concentration camps." With few exceptions, the other officials present echoed these sentiments. Only Governor Carr of Colorado took a moderate position. The voices of those hoping to use the evacuees for agricultural labor were drowned out.³²

Bendetsen and Eisenhower were unable or unwilling to face down this united political opposition. Bendetsen briefly attempted to defend the War Department's actions. Eisenhower closed the meeting; the consensus was that the plan for reception centers was acceptable, as long as the evacuees remained under guard within the centers.³³ As he left Salt Lake City, Eisenhower had no doubt that "the plan to move the evacuees into private employment had to be abandoned—at least temporarily."³⁴ Bendetsen, too, had received the same message. As he described it several weeks later: "You can't move people across the street! The premise is that who you consider to be so dangerous, that you can't permit him to stay at point 'A'—point 'B' will not accept."³⁵

Before it had begun, Eisenhower and the WRA thus abandoned resettlement and adopted confinement. West Coast politicians had achieved their program of exclusion; politicians of the interior states had achieved their program of detention. Without giving up its belief that evacuees should be brought back to normal productive life, WRA had, in effect, become their jailer, contending that confinement was for the benefit of the evacuees and that the controls on their departure were designed to prevent mistreatment by other Americans.³⁶

WRA had to move quickly in finding centers to house 120,000 people and in developing policies and procedures for handling the evacuees soon to come under its jurisdiction. The President had stressed the need for immediate action;³⁷ both the War Department and the WRA were anxious to remove the evacuees from the primitive, make-shift assembly centers.

Selecting the sites for the relocation centers proved complicated. Two sites had been chosen by military authorities before the WRA was born.³⁸ Eight more locations were needed—designed to be “areas where the evacuees might settle down to a more stable kind of life until plans could be developed for their permanent relocation in communities outside the evacuated areas.”³⁹ Site selection required the War Department and the WRA to agree, although each had different interests.⁴⁰ The WRA retained the portion of its early plan that called for large-scale agricultural programs in which evacuees would clear, develop and cultivate the land. Thus, the centers had to be on federal land so that improvements would become a public benefit. The Army, now face-to-face with the actual movement of people, no longer advocated freedom of movement outside the Western Defense Command. It became concerned about security and insisted that sites be located at a safe distance from “strategic installations,” a term that included power lines and reservoirs. The Army also wanted each camp to have a population of at least 5,000 so that the number of guards could be minimized. To be habitable, the centers had to have suitable transportation, power and water facilities.⁴¹ By June 5, after considering 300 proposed sites⁴² and negotiating with many potentially affected state and local government officials, the WRA chose the final eight sites.⁴³

More than any other single factor, the requirement for large tracts of land virtually guaranteed that the sites would be inhospitable. As Roger Daniels explained it: “That these areas were still vacant land in 1942, land that the ever-voracious pioneers and developers had either passed by or abandoned, speaks volumes about their attractiveness.”⁴⁴

The sites were indeed unattractive. Manzanar and Poston, selected by the Army, were in the desert. Although both could eventually produce crops, extensive irrigation would be needed,⁴⁵ and Poston’s climate was particularly harsh. Six other sites were also arid desert. Gila River, near Phoenix,⁴⁶ suffered almost as severely from the heat.⁴⁷ Minidoka and Heart Mountain, the two northernmost centers, were known for hard winters and severe dust storms. Tule Lake was the most developed site; located in a dry lake bed, much of it was ready

for planting.⁴⁸ Topaz was covered in greasewood brush.⁴⁹ Granada was little better, although there was some provision for irrigation.⁵⁰ The last two centers—Rohwer and Jerome in Arkansas—were entirely different. Located in swampland, the sites were heavily wooded, with severe drainage problems.⁵¹ Table 2 lists the location and capacity of each center.

TABLE 2⁵²: Relocation Centers

Name	Location	Capacity (in persons)
Central Utah (Topaz)	West-central Utah	10,000
Colorado River (Poston)		
Unit 1	Western Arizona	10,000
Unit 2	Western Arizona	5,000
Unit 3	Western Arizona	5,000
Gila River (Rivers)		
Butte Camp	Central Arizona	10,000
Canal Camp	Central Arizona	5,000
Granada (Amache)	Southeastern Colorado	8,000
Heart Mountain	Northwestern Wyoming	12,000
Jerome (Denson)	Southeastern Arkansas	10,000
Manzanar	East-central California	10,000
Minidoka (Hunt)	South-central Idaho	10,000
Rohwer	Southeastern Arkansas	10,000
Tule Lake (Newell)	North-central California	16,000

Having selected the sites, the WRA's second job was to develop the policies and procedures that would control the lives of evacuees. This was begun almost immediately, with help from the JACL. In his April 6 letter to Eisenhower, Masaoka set forth a long list of recommendations for regulating life in the camps and stressed, among other things, the importance of respecting the citizenship of the Nisei, protecting the health of elderly Issei, providing educational opportunities, and recognizing that the evacuees were "American" in their outlook and wanted to make a contribution to the war effort.⁵³ The first set of policies issued May 29 were labelled by the Director "tentative, still fairly crude, and subject to immediate change." Further, they did not reach the centers until three weeks after the first groups had arrived. They were not clarified until August, when over half the evacuee population had been transferred to the centers. Given the limited time available and the novelty of WRA's task as both jailer and advocate for the evacuees, it is not surprising that the agency was not fully pre-

pared.⁵⁴ Still, the fact that WRA was not able to provide dependable answers to basic questions about how the centers would be managed probably fed the disaffection that increasingly characterized reactions to the relocation centers.

The confluence of diverse political interests had again conspired against the evacuees. The new centers at which they were arriving were barely an improvement over the assembly centers they had left. The increased freedom and possible resettlement they had anticipated had been reversed in favor of confinement. And the rules that would govern their lives were uncertain or non-existent.

LIFE IN CAMP

Housing and Facilities

Except at Manzanar, which was built as an assembly center and transferred to the WRA for use as a relocation center, all the relocation camps were built from scratch. Thus, the design and facilities were relatively standard. By agreement with the WRA, the camps were built by the War Department according to its own specifications.⁵⁵ Barbed-wire fences, watchtowers, and armed guards surrounded the residential and administrative areas of most camps.⁵⁶

The military police and administrative personnel had separate quarters, more spacious and better furnished. At most centers, evacuees built the administrative housing, which had not been included in the original construction contracts. At Topaz, Gladys Bell and her family, who were with the administrative staff, had an entire four-room barrack complete with piano.⁵⁷ At Manzanar, staff houses were painted and had residential cooling systems, refrigerators, indoor toilets and baths.⁵⁸

Arrangements for the evacuees were not comparable. The basic organizational unit was once again the "block," consisting of about 12 to 14 barracks, a mess hall, baths, showers, toilets, a laundry and a recreation hall.⁵⁹ Each barrack was about 20 by 100 to 120 feet, divided into four or six rooms, each from 20 by 16 to 20 by 25 feet.⁶⁰ Each room housed at least one family, even if the family was very large. Even at the end of 1942, in 928 cases, two families shared a 20 by 25-foot room.⁶¹

Construction was of the kind used to house soldiers overseas—the so-called "theatre of operations" type,⁶² modified somewhat to

accommodate women and children.⁶³ The barracks were built of planks nailed to studs and covered with tarpaper.⁶⁴ In some places the green wood warped quickly, cracking walls and floors.⁶⁵ Congressman Leland Ford said of the Manzanar barracks that "on dusty days, one might just as well be outside as inside."⁶⁶ "So much of our work was done sloppily," Dean Meeker testified of Heart Mountain:

I can remember the foreman's comment when he found cracks in the building. He said, "Well, I guess those Japs will be stuffing their underwear in there to keep the wind out."

In my defense, I will say I applied a bit more diligence and care to my work when I realized people would actually have to survive a Wyoming winter in this housing. We all knew that there was no way anyone accustomed to California weather could possibly survive a Wyoming winter in those barracks. If they were from California, they probably didn't even own the proper clothing for a winter in Cody.⁶⁷

No inside walls or ceilings were included in the original plans. As part of a winterization program, however, evacuee construction crews eventually added firboard ceilings and inside walls in many of the centers.⁶⁸

A visiting reporter from *The San Francisco Chronicle* described quarters at Tule Lake:

Room size—about 15 by 25, considered too big for two reporters.

Condition—dirty.

Contents—two Army cots, each with two Army blankets, one pillow, some sheets and pillow cases (these came as a courtesy from the management), and a coal-burning stove (no coal). There were no dishes, rugs, curtains, or housekeeping equipment of any kind. (We had in addition one sawhorse and three pieces of wood, which the management did not explain.)⁶⁹

The furnishings at other camps were similar. At Minidoka, arriving evacuees found two stacked canvas cots, a pot-bellied stove and a light bulb hanging from the ceiling;⁷⁰ at Topaz, cots, two blankets, a pot-bellied stove and some cotton mattresses.⁷¹ Rooms had no running water, which had to be carried from community facilities.⁷² Running back and forth from the laundry room to rinse and launder soiled diapers was a particular inconvenience.⁷³

For some evacuees the camps were an improvement over the assembly centers.

At least there were flush toilets in the community bathrooms and we were given two rooms instead of one.⁷⁴

The buildings were the same type of barracks, although they had flooring.⁷⁵

Our new homes were better insulated from the dust and storm and noise than those at the assembly center.⁷⁶

Others, however, found not even the minimal comforts that had been planned for them. An unrealistic schedule combined with wartime shortages of labor and materials meant that the WRA had difficulty meeting its construction schedule.⁷⁷ In most cases, the barracks were completed, but at some centers evacuees lived without electric light, adequate toilets or laundry facilities.⁷⁸

When we first arrived at Minidoka, everyone was forced to use outhouses since the sewer system had not been built. For about a year, the residents had to brave the cold and the stench of these accommodations.⁷⁹

Mess halls planned for about 300 people had to handle 600 or 900 for short periods.⁸⁰ Three months after the project opened, Manzanar still lacked equipment for 16 of 36 messhalls.⁸¹ At Gila:

There were 7,700 people crowded into space designed for 5,000. They were housed in messhalls, recreation halls, and even latrines. As many as 25 persons lived in a space intended for four.⁸²

As at the assembly centers, one result was that evacuees were often denied privacy in even the most intimate aspects of their lives.

Apartment is shared by married couple, age around 50 years, and our family of four, one girl just nine and one ten years old, my husband is out during the day on a job. . . . The heat is terrific and the lady in our apartment is very sensitive to heat, so whenever her washing and ironing is done she is always taking naps—makes it hard for children to run in and out—for fear it may disturb her. She is an understanding person, but still there is time she wished she could have slept just another ten minutes.⁸³

Even when families had separate quarters, the partitions between rooms failed to give much privacy. Gladys Bell described the situation at Topaz:

[T]he evacuees . . . had only one room, unless there were around ten in the family. Their rooms had a pot-bellied stove, a single electric light hanging from the ceiling, an Army cot for each person and a blanket for the bed. Each barrack had six rooms with only three flues. This meant that a hole had to be cut through the wall of one room for the stovepipe to join the chimney of the next room. The hole was large so that the wall would not burn. As a result, everything said and some things whispered were easily heard by people living in the next room. Sometimes the family would be a couple with four children living next to an older couple, perhaps of a different religion, older ideas and with a difference in all ways of life—such as music.⁸⁴

Despite these wretched conditions the evacuees again began to rebuild their lives. Several evacuees recall “foraging for bits of wall-board and wood”⁸⁵ and dodging guards to get materials from the scrap lumber piles to build shelves and furniture.⁸⁶ Even the refuse of better times was treasured in camp:

To a friend who became engaged, we gave nails—many of them bent—precious nails preserved in fruit wrappings, snatched from our fathers’ meager supply or found by sifting through the sand in the windbreak where scrap lumber was piled.⁸⁷

Eventually, rooms were partitioned and shelves, tables, chairs and other furniture appeared.⁸⁸ Paint and cloth for curtains and spreads came from mail order houses at evacuee expense.⁸⁹ Flowers bloomed and rock gardens emerged;⁹⁰ trees and shrubs were planted. Many evacuees grew victory gardens.⁹¹ One described the change:

[W]hen we entered camp, it was a barren desert. When we left camp, it was a garden that had been built up without tools, it was green around the camp with vegetation, flowers, and also with artificial lakes, and that’s how we left it.⁹²

The success of evacuees’ efforts to improve their surroundings, however, was always tempered by the harsh climate. In the western camps, particularly Heart Mountain, Poston, Topaz⁹³ and Minidoka, dust was a principal problem. Monica Sone described her first day at Minidoka:

[W]e were given a rousing welcome by a dust storm. . . . We felt as if we were standing in a gigantic sand-mixing machine as the sixty-mile gale lifted the loose earth up into the sky, obliterating everything. Sand filled our mouths and nostrils and stung our faces and hands like a thousand darting needles. Henry and Father pushed on ahead while Mother, Sumi and I followed, hanging onto their jackets, banging suitcases into each other. At last we staggered into our room, gasping and blinded. We sat on our suitcases to rest, peeling off our jackets and scarves. The window panes rattled madly, and the dust poured through the cracks like smoke. Now and then when the wind subsided, I saw other evacuees, hanging on to their suitcases, heads bent against the stinging dust. The wind whipped their scarves and towels from their heads and zipped them out of sight.⁹⁴

In desert camps, the evacuees met severe extremes of temperature as well. In winter it reached 35 degrees below zero⁹⁵ and summers brought temperatures as high as 115°.⁹⁶ Because the desert did not cool off at night, evacuees would splash water on their cots to be cool enough to sleep.⁹⁷ Rattlesnakes and desert wildlife added danger to discomfort.⁹⁸

The Arkansas camps had equally unpleasant weather. Winters were cold and snowy while summers were unbearably hot and humid, heavy with chiggers and clouds of mosquitos:⁹⁹

When the rains came in Rohwer, we could not leave our quarters. The water stagnated at the front steps. . . . The mosquitos that festered there were horrible, and the authorities never had enough quinine for sickness . . . Rohwer was a living nightmare.¹⁰⁰

Necessities: Food, Clothing and Health

The WRA walked a fine line in providing for evacuees' basic needs. On the one hand was their genuine sympathy for the excluded people. On the other was a well-founded apprehension that the press and the politicians would seek out and denounce any evidence that evacuees were being treated generously.¹⁰¹ WRA's compromise was to strive for a system that would provide a healthy but Spartan environment. They did not always succeed, and it was usually the evacuees who suffered when they failed.

The meal system was institutional—food served in messhalls at designated times. Lines were long and tables crowded. Special arrangements were made for infants, the sick or elderly, but, as in most institutions, they were developed from necessity, not convenience. There were formula kitchens for the babies, to which their mothers brought them at designated times; some mothers walked many "blocks" as often as six times a day to get their infants fed when the camps first opened.¹⁰² Others bought hot plates to make formula, but without running water this system was almost as unsatisfactory.¹⁰³ The arrangements for those on restricted diets were difficult. The diet kitchens were often located in the administration complex, far from the residential area; the sick and the elderly had to walk as much as a mile three times a day to get their special food.¹⁰⁴

Food quality and quantity varied among centers, generally improving in the later months as evacuees began to produce it themselves. The WRA's expressed policy was that evacuees were entitled to the same treatment as other American citizens: WRA was to provide an adequate diet; foods rationed to the public would be available to evacuees in the same quantities.¹⁰⁵ The reality, however, was very different. Weiners, dry fish, rice, macaroni and pickled vegetables are among the foods evacuees recall eating most frequently.¹⁰⁶ Meatless days were regular at some centers—two or three times a week,¹⁰⁷ and many items were unavailable. Continuing dairy shortages meant that, at most centers, fluid milk was served only to those with special needs,¹⁰⁸ while

at others, there was watery skim milk.¹⁰⁹ In fact, no really appetizing meals could be produced regularly under a requirement that feeding the evacuees could not cost more than rations for the Army, which were set at 50 cents per person per day.¹¹⁰ Actual costs per evacuee were approximately 45 cents per person per day;¹¹¹ sometimes they fell as low as 31 cents.¹¹²

In January 1943, after accusations that evacuees were being coddled, the WRA adopted new policies which showed that their fear of adverse publicity had overcome any humanitarian impulse. "At no time would evacuees' food have higher specifications than or exceed in quantity what the civil population may obtain in the open market." Centers were ordered to submit their planned menus for each 30-day period to Washington for advance approval to make sure that the public was adequately informed of WRA feeding policies and procedures.¹¹³ Perhaps the best that can be said of the meal system is that no one starved.

No one froze either. As winter approached, many evacuees were unprepared, either because they had brought no warm clothing due to baggage limitations or because they did not own such clothing, never having needed it at home. In response, the WRA provided monthly clothing allowances and distributed surplus clothing. Each employed evacuee and his or her dependents were supposed to receive from \$2 to \$3.75 each month,¹¹⁴ depending on the evacuee's age and the climate of the center. The system, however, did not work well because the shorthanded WRA assigned it to an inexperienced, overworked staff, which was unable to handle the additional workload,¹¹⁵ and delays continually frustrated evacuees at the mercy of the WRA for their survival. The surplus distribution became the principal source of warm clothing during the first winter, when need was greatest. The clothes were old GI peajackets and uniforms, sizes 38 to 44. However unattractive, they were warm and a source of great amusement.¹¹⁶

The adequacy of health care in the camps has been a matter of continuing debate. No issue was raised more frequently during the testimony. The WRA itself readily acknowledged some of the system's larger flaws. The hospitals that had been planned were behind schedule; some were not completed until the end of 1942.¹¹⁷ Equipment shortages were constant and many supplies, including medicines, were unavailable.¹¹⁸ Evacuees were forced back on their own resources, bringing their own equipment from home or making it from materials found in camp.¹¹⁹

By far the biggest problem, however, was too few medical per-

sonnel, particularly nurses.¹²⁰ The result was overworked doctors and nurses and delays in treatment.¹²¹ At Jerome, for example, only seven doctors were on hand to care for 10,000 people in October of 1942.¹²² The only medical profession filled to capacity in the camps was dentists; there were so many at some centers that not all could practice.¹²³ By 1943, the situation in most centers had grown worse as medical personnel left to resettle. By the last half of 1943, not only were personnel few, but hospital bed usage rose as older evacuees whose families had resettled fell back on hospital rather than family care.¹²⁴ The shortage of nurses was handled in part by training evacuees as aides.¹²⁵ Some felt that their training was inadequate:¹²⁶

In Topaz, I took three weeks of instruction from one of the five Registered Nurses assigned to Topaz and went on duty as a Nurse's Aide. I didn't even know the names of the instruments—I felt terribly inadequate to take care of some very sick people.¹²⁷

As a result of nationwide medical personnel shortages, some staff physicians were not the best. At Manzanar, for example, a Caucasian doctor set strict limits on work by the evacuee doctors in his charge, limiting the efficiency of the medical program for some time.¹²⁸ At Tule Lake, the elderly physician in charge was not aware of and would not allow newer medical procedures. After a great deal of protest from the evacuees, he departed.¹²⁹

Caring for people with special medical needs was particularly difficult. In a situation where running water was a luxury and normal conveniences virtually absent, it was very difficult to provide special care. Tuberculosis might well mean separation from one's family to outside facilities for the duration of the evacuation.¹³⁰ Retarded children who could have been cared for by their families at home had to be institutionalized.¹³¹ Serious illnesses, such as mental breakdowns, meant removal to state hospitals.¹³²

There were, however, some positive aspects to the system. Most of the centers stressed preventive health care and set up immunization programs as soon as possible.¹³³ The camp hospitals were nearby, although reaching them might be a problem with no transportation but walking.¹³⁴ Care was free, and evacuees had time to attend to their health.

Any real measure of the system's effectiveness would require a statistical evaluation of the center's health records compared to the records of a comparable group outside the centers. No such studies exist. The WRA noted few problems. Epidemics of chicken pox and respiratory tract infections were mentioned,¹³⁵ as were problems "de-

veloped in connection with the water supply at some centers."¹³⁶ In the Arkansas centers, there was malaria, which abated after a mosquito eradication campaign, better public education and more screening.¹³⁷ The WRA asserted that evacuees' physical health remained satisfactory,¹³⁸ and, in a 1946 comparison of death rates in the camps to deaths in the U.S. population as a whole, they found that death rates in the camps were lower than those in the general population.¹³⁹

Testimony before the Commission, however, suggests a different story. The evacuees recall more than one problem caused by inadequate sewage disposal. Epidemics of dysentery were reported at Topaz,¹⁴⁰ Minidoka,¹⁴¹ and Jerome,¹⁴² and a typhoid epidemic occurred at Minidoka.¹⁴³

Evacuees testified about polio and tuberculosis as well.¹⁴⁴ The polio problem was apparently quite severe at Granada during the latter part of 1943. Some organized activities were cancelled,¹⁴⁵ and WRA stopped giving passes to nearby towns.¹⁴⁶ At Poston, Rita Cates found 140 cases of tuberculosis in 8 months.¹⁴⁷ Several evacuees testified about situations in which inadequate care led to death or disability that might have been avoided.¹⁴⁸

Employment

One of the many unresolved issues for arriving evacuees was the extent to which they would be required to support themselves. Were they in fact prisoners for whom the state had an obligation to provide continuing minimal help? Or were they simply to be regarded as people who had moved, responsible for themselves, for whom WRA would provide initial help and encouragement? Eisenhower's original plan tended toward the latter view. The WRA would, in the main, help provide or locate opportunities for the evacuees, not regard them as indefinite dependents. Once the decision had been made that evacuees were to be confined, however, WRA expectations had to change. Evacuees confined to government camps would definitely have limited career opportunities. Still, the WRA was not prepared to regard evacuees as wards of the state. The WRA, determined to strive for communities that would be as self-sufficient as possible,¹⁴⁹ wanted to avoid creating a permanently dependent population like the Indians. They believed that prolonged idleness would deepen the evacuees' feelings of frustration and isolation. Further, the war effort demanded that all labor be used, and WRA believed constructive work would rehabilitate evacuees in the eyes of their countrymen.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, the WRA approach to employment (as to many other issues) became a compro-

mise—expecting and encouraging evacuees to work while denying them freedom of choice or incentives to perform. Needless to say, the result satisfied no one.

The first plan to emerge from these conflicting objectives was the notion of an evacuee work corps. Each working-age evacuee would be given an opportunity to join the corps. Enlistment was voluntary but the evacuee had to enlist to be eligible for work. The corps was to develop land, build irrigation structures, produce food and turn out war-related manufactured items.¹⁵¹

By May 29, the WRA had refined its plan. Each center would be a “partnership enterprise.” WRA would furnish the essentials of living and try to develop work opportunities. Evacuee members of the work corps were to work toward providing their own living requirements, developing the center’s land, and producing surplus goods for sale. At the end of the year, any profits (the surplus of earnings over maintenance costs) would be distributed to work-corps members. Meanwhile, evacuees would receive cash advances. Eligible residents who chose not to join the corps would be charged \$20 a month for themselves and each dependent to cover subsistence costs.¹⁵²

This plan set the amount of “cash advances,” which eventually became “wages.” On March 23, before any policy had been adopted, a Hearst newspaper ran a story alleging that evacuees “will be paid much more than the American soldiers fighting the country’s battles overseas.” The evacuees, it reported, would get \$50 to \$94 a month, while the soldier’s base pay was \$21 a month. This misleading story led to a Congressional investigation and attendant publicity that put great pressure on Eisenhower. Eventually he agreed that evacuee pay would not, under any circumstances, exceed the base pay of a soldier; the scale adopted was \$12 a month for unskilled labor, \$16 for skilled labor, and \$19 for professional employees.¹⁵³ Congress and the press had delivered a message parallel to that of the mountain states governors: the WRA might look on its work as returning to normal life a group against whom there were no charges and most of whom were concededly loyal to the United States, but a great many members of Congress and the press saw WRA as warden of a dangerous group whose subversive potential required stern control. As a result, most of WRA’s constructive programs were defeated by measures of compulsion or deprivation.

Despite elaborate planning, neither the work corps nor the “partnership” idea ever got off the ground. The evacuees decisively rejected the work corps by refusing to sign up in large numbers. The partnership

notion, with or without the work corps, was flawed. Some centers had greater potential than others; the accounting system would have been extremely complex, and the whole scheme was subject to allegations of "unfair competition" from local interests. By August 1942, it was dropped. The only element that remained was the schedule of "cash advances," now known as "wages."¹⁵⁴

The new policy adopted in August remained substantially unchanged throughout the WRA program. Its principal elements were:

- Evacuees in centers would receive food, shelter, medical care and education without charge.
- Evacuees working at the centers would be paid \$12, \$16 or \$19 a month.
- Unemployment compensation payments, at rates ranging from \$1.50 to \$4.75 a month, would be paid to each employable evacuee (and each dependent) who was out of work through no fault of his own.¹⁵⁵

The wage scale immediately became controversial and remained so. Public opinion dictated that wages should be low. Evacuees demanded a higher scale; they saw themselves as victims of a misguided, hysterical war reaction and utterly undeserving of treatment different from that of other Americans.

Moreover, the system caused severe financial hardship. Evacuees could not afford to meet even their minimal needs inside the centers. Sometimes the barest essentials in the Sears catalogue, such as shoes for the children, were out of reach. Meeting their outside obligations, such as mortgage payments, was impossible unless they already had savings or income-producing property. And it was insulting. A WRA librarian received \$167 a month, while her evacuee staff received \$16 a month.¹⁵⁶ Despite the agitation, the system was never changed. By the time it might have been, the WRA was encouraging evacuees to leave the centers and did not want to create an incentive to stay.

Opportunities for work were also the subject of continuing debate and change. The WRA had promised jobs for those who wanted to work, but meager opportunities led to overstaffing and encouraged slack work habits. When the WRA decided to tighten up in 1943, eliminating many jobs and much of the unemployment roll, there was considerable protest. Labor grievances were widespread and motivation was a real problem. Many evacuees saw no reason to devote their best efforts to a system which displayed so little trust in them and held out such demeaning rewards.¹⁵⁷

Despite these problems, the employment program was not a total

failure. The centers were staffed almost completely by evacuees, and some agricultural efforts and war industries succeeded moderately.

At all centers, workers were most needed in operations—food preparation,¹⁵⁸ winterization,¹⁵⁹ health and sanitation, security¹⁶⁰ and the like.¹⁶¹ Feeding the community was most labor-intensive.¹⁶² Among those who testified about their employment, by far the largest group worked in center operations.

Although the centers never met WRA expectations for agriculture, some did produce considerable amounts of food. Begun at Tule Lake and Gila River, vegetable production later became substantial at other centers as well.¹⁶³ By the end of 1943, WRA estimated that the centers were producing 85 percent of their own vegetables and that 2.5 million pounds had been sold.¹⁶⁴ In addition to vegetables, all of the centers eventually raised hogs.¹⁶⁵ “The hogs ate everything we left and ultimately we ate the hogs.”¹⁶⁶ Most raised poultry as well. Four had beef herds, and Gila River ran a dairy.¹⁶⁷

The first industry in operation was the camouflage net project at Manzanar. From June to December 1942, nearly 500 citizen evacuees garnished nets with colored fabric in summer, winter and desert patterns. Near the end of 1942, net factories operating under contract began production at Gila River and Poston. They set up an incentive system that allowed workers to make extra money by high production. Not surprisingly, the incentive system was resented by those to whom no incentives were offered.¹⁶⁸

During 1943, two other war-related industries were established: a silk-screen poster shop at Heart Mountain and a model warship facility at Gila River, both preparing Navy orders.¹⁶⁹ In 1943 sawmills began at two centers.¹⁷⁰ Several other industries began to produce goods for internal consumption. By the end of 1942, sewing projects to renovate and repair work clothes; woodworking establishments to produce furniture; and projects to produce bean sprouts and soy sauce were under way.¹⁷¹ In 1943, others were added.¹⁷² Susumu Togasaki described the growth of small-scale enterprise through the birth of his *tofu* (bean curd) factory:

We began manufacturing with a meat grinder and a washing machine. I recruited my friends and acquaintances (Messrs. Yamaguchi, Shimizu, Asakawa, Harada, Tsuruoka, and Mrs. Umezawa). There was some controversy regarding our spending too much money. So we instituted an invoice system with the administration. We invoiced all the *tofu* and bean sprouts delivered to the mess halls in the three camps. We also contra-accounted the re-

ceipt of raw materials, and the salaries of the members of the tofu factory. We showed a profit at the end of the first month.

Our invoices were later to be a problem. The administration made inquiries in various cities regarding the prices of bean sprouts and tofu. They apparently felt our paper profits were too high. However, complaints were voiced by civilians in the cities that our prices were too low.

Once the tofu and bean sprout operations were running smoothly, our group looked for other projects. In response to the unavailability of fresh flowers for funerals, weddings, and gatherings, we decided to manufacture artificial flowers. We purchased crepe paper and wire on a retail basis from Phoenix. We soon realized the crepe paper prices were exorbitant, and wrote to the manufacturer. We began buying enough crepe paper to be awarded the sole distributorship for the Pacific Southwest. My friends later sold crepe paper to the retail stores in the Phoenix area. We also started a greeting card manufacturing business, using linoleum block prints. The cards were designed and executed by artists among the internees.

The majority of the people working these operations were paid \$19.00 per month. The administration felt some of the people should be paid less, since that was a supervisory wage rate. I argued that each person on our staff was exercising independent judgment. Thus the salary levels were justified and continued.¹⁷³

Finally, "community enterprises" provided goods and services to the evacuees beyond the WRA subsistence items—stores, hairdressers, newspapers, theaters and the like. Most of these were begun under WRA auspices; the plan, however, was to transform them into consumer cooperatives.¹⁷⁴ Many centers did in fact establish such cooperatives,¹⁷⁵ purchasing goods on credit from wholesalers. Those not set up as cooperatives were organized as trusts.¹⁷⁶ By the end of 1942, there were 116 such enterprises doing over \$700,000 worth of business a month.¹⁷⁷

From Day to Day

Life begins each day with a siren blast at 7:00 a. m., with breakfast served cafeteria style. Work begins at 8:00 for the adults, school at 8:30 or 9:00 for the children.¹⁷⁸

Camp life was highly regimented and it was rushing to the wash basin to beat the other groups, rushing to the mess hall for breakfast, lunch and dinner. When a human being is placed in captivity, survival is the key. We develop a very negative attitude toward authority. We spent countless hours to defy or beat the system. Our minds started to function like any POW or convicted criminal.¹⁷⁹

Living in a relocation camp meant waiting, not just waiting for food

and facilities, but waiting to see what would happen next. There was no way to prepare for the future—to plan for retirement or to choose a career path. There was little reason to work, except to pass the time or to fill immediate community needs. Choices were denied, from the choice of where to live to the choice of what to eat. Merely surviving was physically and psychically draining. Getting to the messhall on time; finding an empty shower; keeping the diapers clean; coping with the heat, the cold, insects or snakes were major tasks. Holding the family together without privacy or authority required a full commitment. Yet the camps were busy places. Most of those who could work, did so, and both WRA and the evacuees clearly tried to create the illusion of a normal community with normal pastimes. Nowhere was this more evident than in their efforts to set up community activities.

Yet the same contradictions within WRA applied here as in other aspects of living. How could they provide enough without being accused of providing too much? How could they permit evacuees to control their communities without compromising their responsibilities as jailers? The illusion that the captive population controlled their own lives could not be sustained. Once again, compromise satisfied no one.

Education. When the evacuees arrived at the relocation centers, the education program was little more than a promise that schools would be the first order of business.¹⁸⁰ School buildings and equipment had not been part of the original construction, so classes were held in barrack-like recreation halls.¹⁸¹ The WRA described conditions as schools opened somewhat later than usual between 1942 and January 1943:

With no exceptions, schools at the centers opened in unpartitioned barracks meant for other purposes and generally bare of furniture. Sometimes the teacher had a desk and chair; more often she had only a chair. In the first few weeks many of the children had no desks or chairs and for the most part were obliged to sit on the floor—or stand up all day. Linoleum laying and additional wall insulation were accomplished in these makeshift schoolrooms some time after the opening of school. At some centers cold waves struck before winterization could be started.

By the [end of 1942] . . . it was no longer necessary for many pupils to sit on the floor, but seating was frequently of a rudimentary character. Text books and other supplies were gradually arriving. Laboratory and shop equipment and facilities, however, were still lacking. No center had been able to obtain its full quota of teachers.¹⁸²

At Minidoka, the “washroom became the biology and chemistry laboratory.”¹⁸³ At Tule Lake, students in the typing class never saw a

typewriter: "We drew circles on a sheet of paper, lettered the circles, and practiced by pressing our fingers over the circles."¹⁸⁴ The shortage of textbooks and supplies was mitigated, though never resolved. States donated old textbooks¹⁸⁵ and other donations came through the American Friends Service Committee.¹⁸⁶

Recruiting and training teachers was a constant problem. Few evacuees were certified, because teaching opportunities before the war were few for those of Japanese ancestry. It was difficult to recruit outside teachers because of the centers' harsh living conditions,¹⁸⁷ and staff turnover was high.¹⁸⁸ Thus, many evacuees with two or more years of college became "assistant teachers" who in some cases assumed a full teaching load.¹⁸⁹ Although an evacuee certification program was established at each center, the shortage continued, particularly as the resettlement effort quickened.¹⁹⁰ One evacuee described his chemistry class:

I recall sitting in classrooms without books and listening to the instructor talking about technical matters that we could not study in depth. The lack of qualified evacuee teachers, the shortage of trained teachers was awful. I remember having to read a chapter a week in chemistry and discovering at the end of a semester that we had finished one full year's course. There was a total loss of scheduling with no experiments, demonstrations or laboratory work.¹⁹¹

Despite these problems, education began at four different levels: nursery school, elementary school, high school, and adult education.¹⁹² Limited vocational education was added.¹⁹³ School clubs and extra-curricular activities began.¹⁹⁴

The curriculum, set in consultation with state education authorities, was consistent with the recognized standards of the state in which the center was located,¹⁹⁵ although some evacuees recall a dearth of science, language, math and other college preparatory courses.¹⁹⁶ All schools except Tule Lake were accredited. The children of families leaving the centers could usually transfer to outside schools without losing credit,¹⁹⁷ although some evacuees testified that some of their camp credits were not accepted.¹⁹⁸

Education was a high priority in the centers, but adverse conditions took a toll. Many evacuees believed that deficiencies in the educational program have handicapped them ever since,¹⁹⁹ both because the physical environment was poor and because evacuees' attitudes toward the centers colored their attitudes about education.

The education program, ironically, emphasized "Americanization"

and inculcation of the country's values. The centers certainly provided a new context for the precepts of the Founding Fathers:

An oft-repeated ritual in relocation camp schools . . . was the salute to the flag followed by the singing of "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty"—a ceremony Caucasian teachers found embarrassingly awkward if not cruelly poignant in the austere prison-camp setting.²⁰⁰

The life of children is, of course, in many ways oblivious of the fears and angers of adults, but experiences of childhood teach their own lessons, and the half-free, half-prison world of the camps left its mark:

In some ways, I suppose, my life was not too different from a lot of kids in America between the years 1942 and 1945. I spent a good part of my time playing with my brothers and friends, learned to shoot marbles, watched sandlot baseball and envied the older kids who wore Boy Scout uniforms. We shared with the rest of America the same movies, screen heroes and listened to the same heartrending songs of the forties. We imported much of America into the camps because, after all, we were Americans. Through imitation of my brothers, who attended grade school within the camp, I learned the salute to the flag by the time I was five years old. I was learning, as best one could learn in Manzanar, what it meant to live in America. But I was also learning the sometimes bitter price one has to pay for it.²⁰¹

Recreation. In the early months, the recreation halls often had to be used for other purposes, equipment was minimal, and professionals to organize the program were few. By the winter of 1942, however, conditions were improving. Church groups loaned or gave equipment,²⁰² and supervisors were on the job in all centers but one.²⁰³

Athletics were a major recreation. While the preferences of Issei and Nisei differed in most cases, baseball was a common denominator. At some centers, there were as many as 100 teams active at one time, ranging from children to Issei in their sixties.²⁰⁴ Basketball and touch football were popular as well. Indoor sports were limited to those that took little space—primarily ping-pong, judo, boxing²⁰⁵ and badminton.²⁰⁶ Sumo wrestling bouts were given for those interested in the traditional sports of Japan.²⁰⁷ By the end of 1943, evacuees were sometimes allowed to leave the grounds, so that hiking and swimming became popular pastimes.²⁰⁸

The evacuees also diverted themselves with dancing, plays, concerts, and games—cards, chess, checkers, *Goh*, *Shogi* and *Mah-jongg*.²⁰⁹ Some activities were underwritten by outside groups—an art competition in 1943, for example, was sponsored by Massachusetts Quak-

ers.²¹⁰ There were numerous art or craft exhibitions²¹¹ and films that came to each messhall.²¹² At Manzanar, an outdoor walk-in theatre was eventually built, where evacuees could see most current films.²¹³ Although there were few instruments, there was a good deal of music. Dancing classes at Topaz, for example, included tap, ballet, toe and Oriental, and there were two orchestras.²¹⁴

Most of the centers had libraries. By 1943, the Manzanar library had a staff of sixteen and five branches including a main library, a small fiction branch, a high school and elementary branch and a teacher's library.²¹⁵ By the end of 1943, most of the libraries had Japanese language sections as well.²¹⁶

Holidays remained important, as they had been in the assembly centers. At Topaz, for example, Arbor Day was celebrated by distributing small shrubs to each block; at Christmas, there were decorated trees, special food, and presents donated by the American Friends Society;²¹⁷ New Year's was celebrated²¹⁸ traditionally with *mochi*, a kind of rice cake; at Easter, a large outdoor ceremony was planned; and the Buddhists held a parade and folk dances to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Buddha.²¹⁹

The WRA encouraged the establishment of local chapters of national organizations.²²⁰ By the end of 1942, most centers had chapters of the American Red Cross, YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.²²¹ There were scrap metal drives, bond sales, Red Cross drives and blood donations.²²² Ultimately, these organizations, particularly the YMCA and YWCA, were active in helping evacuees to resettle.²²³

Not all recreation, of course, was organized. At Topaz, women created beautiful designs in seashells collected around the campground, once the bottom of an ancient lake. Many of the men did woodworking. At other centers doll-making, sewing, crochet, calligraphy and flower-arranging were popular.²²⁴

Religion. The WRA's policy was to allow complete freedom of worship, except for barring State Shinto on the grounds that it involved Emperor worship.²²⁵ A building—generally the recreation hall—was provided for services, and evacuees were permitted to invite outside pastors if they wished.²²⁶ Pianos and organs were loaned or donated.²²⁷ Originally, the WRA was willing to allow churches to be built,²²⁸ but later reversed this plan because of materials shortages.²²⁹ The WRA did not pay ministers,²³⁰ so they were financed by their congregations or the national churches.²³¹ Unlike the assembly centers, here the use of Japanese was permitted.²³²

Newspapers. All centers had community newspapers, published

in English with a Japanese language section. They were supervised by the WRA center information officer but the editors and staff were evacuees. *The San Francisco Chronicle* reported that there was no censorship at Tule Lake and that the content was "innocuous,"²³³ though one must question whether censorship would be necessary where the seat of power was so obvious and the effective paths of protest so few. Most papers published two or three times a week, although some were weekly and Poston's came out daily.²³⁴ Most were underwritten by the WRA; at Manzanar, Minidoka and Heart Mountain, papers were printed and managed by the community enterprise associations.²³⁵ The papers were intended to keep the evacuees informed about the center and outside. Camp administration used them for announcements, and resettlement news appeared frequently once it was under way.²³⁶

Government. From the beginning, it was clear that a channel of communication between camp administrators and evacuees would be needed. WRA planned a system of community government to meet this need and also to function like a municipal government adopting ordinances and policies on internal matters.²³⁷ The form was to be an elected community council of representatives from each block. For legal and policy reasons, however, WRA held a veto over the legislative activities of the governments and adopted policies describing how they would be structured.²³⁸ Because of these restrictions, particularly one barring Issei from holding elective office, many evacuees regarded the system as a sham, further evidence that they were not trusted, and an example of bad faith by the WRA.²³⁹

Despite these problems, most centers eventually did have some sort of government. By the end of 1942, eight centers had temporary community councils. Eventually, all the centers had councils except Manzanar, which continued to function through its system of elected block managers.²⁴⁰

At some centers, block managers were the real channels of communication. Generally appointed by the project director (except at Manzanar, where block managers were elected) and usually a respected Issei, the block manager had three specific responsibilities: to ensure that evacuees had necessities; to supervise maintenance of grounds and structures; and to transmit official WRA announcements and regulations.²⁴¹ They were paid the going wage of \$16 a month.²⁴² Many of these individuals enjoyed a measure of patriarchal respect that gave them authority²⁴³ within the community and allowed them to lead when the community councils could not.

Security. The typical relocation center was surrounded by barbed-

wire fences punctuated with guard towers.²⁴⁴ At Topaz, the evacuees themselves built the fences and towers after they arrived.²⁴⁵ By agreement between the Army and the WRA, the Army assumed responsibility for guarding the perimeter,²⁴⁶ controlling traffic in and out of the centers and, within the Western Defense Command, inspecting parcels for contraband.²⁴⁷

I worked at the camp post office alongside American soldiers who were to inspect packages for contraband. Although not all could be described as such, most were callous, destructive in their inspection of mail order packages, and insensitive. Clothing was cut with their knives and intimate articles (including condoms, etc.) were held up for all to see, causing great embarrassment to the recipients.²⁴⁸

The military police were solely for external guarding unless they were called in by the project director to handle an emergency.²⁴⁹ Even so, they created problems in several instances. A WRA investigation of Manzanar in the summer of 1942 reported:

The guards have been instructed to shoot anyone who attempts to leave the Center without a permit, and who refuses to halt when ordered to do so. The guards are armed with guns that are effective at a range of up to 500 yards. I asked Lt. Buckner if a guard ordered a Japanese who was out of bounds to halt and the Jap did not do so, would the guard actually shoot him. Lt. Buckner's reply was that he only hoped the guard would bother to ask him to halt. He explained that the guards were finding guard service very monotonous, and that nothing would suit them better than to have a little excitement, such as shooting a Jap.

Some time ago, a Japanese [Nisei] was shot for being outside of a Center. . . . The guard said that he ordered the Japanese to halt—that the Japanese started to run away from him, so he shot him. The Japanese was seriously injured, but recovered. He said that he was collecting scrap lumber to make shelves in his house, and that he did not hear the guard say halt. The guard's story does not appear to be accurate, inasmuch as the Japanese was wounded in the front and not in the back.²⁵⁰

There were shootings at other centers as well. At Topaz, an elderly evacuee thought to be escaping was killed.²⁵¹ Mine Okubo described the incident:

A few weeks later the Wakasa case stirred up the center. An elderly resident was shot and killed within the center area inside the fence, by a guard in one of the watchtowers. Particulars and facts of the matter were never satisfactorily disclosed to the residents. The anti-administration leaders again started to howl and the rest of the residents shouted for protection against soldiers with guns.

As a result, the guards were later removed to the rim of the outer project area and firearms were banned.²⁵²

At Gila River, a guard shot and wounded a mentally deranged evacuee.²⁵³ At Tule Lake, after segregation, an evacuee in an altercation with a guard was shot and killed.²⁵⁴

Even when the guards were not shooting, their presence had a lasting impact. As George Takei described it:

I was too young to understand, but I do remember the barbed wire fence from which my parents warned me to stay away. I remember the sight of high guard towers. I remember soldiers carrying rifles, and I remember being afraid.²⁵⁵

Internal security was the center manager's job. Generally, he would appoint an internal security officer to supervise a police force composed largely of evacuees. The internal security forces were to make all arrests. Misdemeanors were handled at the center, and felony suspects were turned over to outside authorities. The FBI was called if intelligence or investigation of subversive activities was needed.²⁵⁶

Generally, the crime record at the centers compared favorably with that of an average American community of similar size. A 1944 survey of comparative crime rates indicated that the law was being broken about a third as often in relocation centers as in an ordinary city.²⁵⁷

Tensions and Crisis

Two-thirds—the younger, American-born and American-citizen Nisei—are becoming increasingly bitter, resentful and even sullen.

The camp is a mare's nest of rumors, of suspicion and distrust. Many of the Japanese feel that the Government has not kept all its promises—and the Government certainly hasn't—and they wait apprehensively for the next blow to fall.²⁵⁸

Discontent over camp living conditions was inevitable. Housing and food were poor. Suspicion that staff was stealing and selling food was widespread.²⁵⁹ Wages and clothing allowances were delayed. For many older residents, there were no jobs. WRA had promised that household goods would be brought to evacuees as soon as they arrived; months later, none had come. There were continual shortages of equipment and material for education and recreation. WRA had promised that one of its first jobs would be to build schools and furnish school equipment, but priority often went instead to improving quarters for WRA personnel.²⁶⁰

Fear, uncertainty and the monotony of enforced idleness aggravated tension. At the older centers, WRA policies had not been set when evacuees arrived, and there were no answers to many of their questions.²⁶¹ They feared the future—not only what would happen after the war, but also whether there would be enough food or quality medical care at the centers.²⁶² Many had lost income and property, which left them few resources to fall back on. They feared the “outside.” Relations with outside communities were poor, and evacuees knew that some towns had passed resolutions against the free movement of evacuees. Local communities and politicians had investigated the camps for evidence of “coddling.”²⁶³

Evacuees feared and resented the changes forced by life in the centers, particularly the breakdown of family authority, created in part by a situation in which children no longer depended so heavily on their parents. Family separation was common, and mass living discouraged normal communication and family activity.²⁶⁴ Perhaps most difficult, the position of the head of the family had been weakened. No longer the breadwinner providing food and shelter, he had been supplanted by the government; his authority over the family and his ability to lead and discipline were diminished. Children unsettlingly found their parents as helpless as they.²⁶⁵

At the root of it all, evacuees resented being prisoners against whom no crime was charged and for whom there was no recourse. Armed guards patrolled their community and searched their packages. No evacuee could have a camera. Even beer was prohibited. For a long time, no evacuee could leave the center, except for emergency reasons, and then only in the company of someone who was not of Japanese ancestry.²⁶⁶ Evacuee positions were subordinate to WRA personnel, regardless of ability, and wages were low.²⁶⁷ At some centers, project officials actively tried to maintain class and role distinctions, forbidding WRA personnel and evacuees to eat in the same messhall, for example.²⁶⁸

Not all hostility was directed at the WRA; tensions among evacuees also began to surface. Conflicts between Issei and Nisei arose. Most difficult was coping with the WRA-mandated “self-government,” which specified that only citizens could serve on community councils. Parallel organizations, like competing block manager groups made up largely of Issei, heightened conflicts.²⁶⁹

There were also conflicts between early and later arrivals. Early arrivals tended to be young, aggressive people who had volunteered to open the centers. They were accused of having taken the best jobs,²⁷⁰

often the level of administration just below WRA staff. Charges of corruption, incompetence and, most divisive, collaboration began to grow.²⁷¹

The same kinds of problems developed between JACL leaders, who were often favored by center administrators,²⁷² and other evacuees, particularly the Kibei, who were denied some of the rights (such as student leave) that other evacuees received.²⁷³ Some JACL leaders blamed the Issei and Kibei for camp disturbances and charged them with being "disloyal."²⁷⁴ In fact, Masaoka volunteered to Myer that JACL leaders might identify the "known agitators" at the camps so that the WRA could separate them from the rest of the evacuees.²⁷⁵ Some evacuees felt that the JACL had sold out the cause of Japanese Americans.²⁷⁶

As tension grew, anyone perceived as close to the administration became suspect as an *inu* or dog.²⁷⁷ At Manzanar, a group called the Black Dragons surfaced, a handful of profascist enthusiasts for Imperial Japan. Among other activities, the Black Dragons instigated rock-throwing at the camouflage-net workers²⁷⁸ and beat those they considered *inu*. Other gangs, too, were involved in beatings. As the leave program got under way, draining the centers of many of the most constructively aggressive young men,²⁷⁹ the gangs grew.

Other signs of disaffection were emotional meetings and a petition in favor of better living and working conditions.²⁸⁰ Karl Yoneda testified:

[We] formed the Manzanar Citizens Federation on July 20, 1942. Some of the topics we discussed were: improved camp conditions, education of citizens for leadership, participation in the war efforts and postwar preparations.²⁸¹

Finally came the crises at Poston and Manzanar. Although these were the only two major confrontations (except at Tule Lake after the segregation), beatings and hostilities continued.²⁸²

Incidents at Poston and Manzanar. At Poston on November 1, 1942, an evacuee who had cooperated with the WRA and was suspected of being an "informer" was beaten by a group of unidentified men. Evacuee police arrested two men on suspicion and held them at the FBI's request while the beating was investigated. After the two had been detained two days, a group of older evacuees asked their release; the request was refused. The next day, a crowd of about 1,000 demanded the release of the prisoners as did the community council. When their request was refused, the council resigned. Although one

suspect was released after the FBI investigation, the other was held to be tried in the county court.²⁸³

The evacuees formed a leadership committee which decreed a general strike²⁸⁴ and organized pickets surrounding the center's jail to prevent removal of the detained man. On November 23, an agreement was finally reached in which the prisoner was released to custody of two evacuee lawyers pending trial, and the emergency leaders agreed to help stop the beatings and try to establish better rapport with the administration.²⁸⁵

On December 5, 1942, at Manzanar, a suspected "informer" was assaulted by six masked men. From the hospital he said he could identify one of the attackers, who was arrested and jailed outside the center. The next day a mass meeting was held to protest the arrest. The crowd decided to try to negotiate with the project director, appointing a committee of five. Meanwhile, the project director had asked military police to stand by. At first the director refused to negotiate. Later he agreed to do so and thought he had reached a compromise: the suspect would be returned and tried at the center and evacuees would cooperate on various future matters. Under the agreement, the suspect was returned to the center jail.²⁸⁶

Later that day, the crowd reassembled.²⁸⁷ They demanded the suspect's release and made plans to get ten or eleven other suspected "informers."²⁸⁸ At this point, the project director called in the military police. When the crowd refused to disperse, the MPs threw tear gas. The crowd formed again as soon as the gas had blown away. When a person in the crowd started an empty car and headed it toward a machine gun, the MPs opened fire. Two evacuees were killed and nine wounded.²⁸⁹

I ran and became one of the curious spectators. The MP fired shots into the defenseless crowd. A classmate, Jimmy Ito, was shot and killed. It was a terrifying experience.²⁹⁰

The suspected "informers," a group who had cooperated with WRA administrators, were removed for safety to the military police barracks and later to an abandoned CCC camp, from which they resettled.²⁹¹ Those whom the authorities believed to have been implicated in the mass demonstrations were sent either to Justice Department internment camps (if aliens) or to a WRA isolation camp at Moab, Utah (if citizens). Eventually the WRA isolation camp and its inhabitants, now including dissidents from other centers as well, were moved to Leupp, Arizona. From Leupp, some eventually returned to relo-

cation centers or to internment camps; most, however, were removed to Tule Lake after segregation, when Leupp was closed.²⁹²

The allegations of “informer” and “collaborator” that underlie the incidents at Poston and Manzanar touch nerves still sensitive today. The same is true of the controversy over whether the WRA’s community analysts operated in good faith. In early 1943, the WRA had established a Community Analysis Section designed to “assist in the problems of administering the relocation centers, in the interests of both administrators and evacuees.”²⁹³ The analysts, many of whom were sociologists and anthropologists, observed and interviewed WRA staff and evacuees, then made recommendations to improve the WRA program, yielding a substantial literature of over 100 reports. The Commission heard some testimony, particularly that of Dr. Peter Suzuki,²⁹⁴ alleging that some of the analysts were not objective reporters and problem-solvers, but informers for the WRA who suppressed important information. Dr. Edward Spicer, formerly head of the community analysts, offered a rebuttal of the Suzuki charges.²⁹⁵

The role of the analysts and the question of whether cooperation with or resistance to the WRA, passive or active, was the better course for evacuees, remain matters of intense, sometimes bitter controversy among those who lived in the camps. There is no “right” answer to the evacuees’ dilemma; nor do isolated examples of informing prove or disprove WRA’s intentions. In both cases, the facts are almost impossible to determine. For the Commission to delve into these matters, attempting to settle old scores, would be inappropriate.

Leave

It was an opportunity for the farmers and *hakujins* [white folk] out there because they were looking for cheap labor. Here was this source, in this camp, for cheap labor and they said why not? We saw it as an opportunity to get to go to the store and to buy stuff to bring back to the family.²⁹⁶

Even as Eisenhower decided in April 1942 that the WRA would plan primarily in terms of confining the evacuees, the process that would secure their release was beginning. Before the first evacuees reached the relocation centers, the WDC had begun to release a few for one of two purposes: to continue their college education or to harvest crops.

The evacuation meant that some 3,500 Japanese Americans would be prohibited from attending colleges and universities on the West Coast—an incalculable loss to both the nation and the ethnic Japanese community.²⁹⁷ First to recognize and confront the problem was a group

from the University of California at Berkeley led by Robert Gordon Sproul, then president of the university. Sproul and his colleagues set out to transfer as many students as possible to universities in the interior.²⁹⁸ Milton Eisenhower, also concerned about the problem, had contacted Clarence Pickett, a prominent Quaker leader. Pickett recruited a group of educators, industrialists and cultural leaders to form the National Student Relocation Council, which then set about transferring students to other institutions.²⁹⁹

Even with such impressive support, numerous kinds of resistance to the program had to be overcome. Many institutions refused to accept evacuee students because the university was involved in war-related research.³⁰⁰ The students themselves were sometimes harassed:

At my first opportunity, in March, 1943, I left camp to attend school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. On my way to Milwaukee, I was harassed by MPs checking for my ID number and pass many times. I even got spat upon by some of the passengers on the train.

When I arrived in Milwaukee, I discovered that the engineering school had misrepresented themselves and only wanted my money. Then I moved to Chicago, Illinois and with the help of American Friends Service Committee, found a job in a box factory. I worked there for three months.

Then I tried to enroll in a school of engineering at the University of Illinois, but when I told them I was an evacuee from camp, they refused my admission. I told them of my WRA clearance, but my protests went unheeded. Finally, I was accepted at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, because I listed my Chicago address and did not mention internment.³⁰¹

The federal government never supported these students, except to subsidize travel. The majority were aided by private philanthropy, most of it organized by various Christian groups.³⁰² Several evacuees mentioned the efforts of the American Friends Service Committee,³⁰³ others depended on their parents' meager savings.³⁰⁴

Nevertheless, some 250 students had left to attend one of 143 colleges and universities by autumn 1942.³⁰⁵ Eventually, the program placed about 4,300 students.³⁰⁶

The second escape from the camps was the seasonal leave program for farm labor. As early as the beginning of April 1942, the WDC was receiving requests to release evacuees for seasonal farm labor and trying to construct a policy.³⁰⁷ By early summer, the agricultural producers had become increasingly concerned that, without help, the crops, particularly sugar beets, would be lost. At the beginning of May, they petitioned the White House for help, and the agricultural leave program began.³⁰⁸

The first group of 15 evacuees was released on May 21 from the Portland Assembly Center to help thin beets in eastern Oregon.³⁰⁹ The program had a number of requirements. Governors at the state level; sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys, commissioners and judges at the county level, were required to pledge in writing that labor was needed and that workers' safety would be guaranteed; employers were required to furnish transportation and had to pay prevailing wages; evacuees could not be hired in place of available local labor. The U.S. Employment Service in the affected counties agreed to provide housing in the area of employment at no cost to evacuees. By the end of June, 1,500 workers had been recruited under the program. Incidents were few and minor. Because the evacuees were efficient and well-liked, "labor pirating" by prospective employers occurred. Contracts between employers and evacuee groups helped correct the problem. In September the demand for seasonal workers from the centers increased enormously; by mid-October, 10,000 evacuees were on seasonal leave, and the demand well exceeded the supply.³¹⁰ When the harvest ended, the Nisei were credited with having saved the sugar beet crops of several western states.³¹¹

Although the WRA tried to ensure that employers made clear the conditions in which evacuees would be working,³¹² they were not always successful.

[W]hen we arrived there, we were met by a farmer supervisor who led us to a large horse barn, one-third of which was filled with hay. He told us this was where we were going to sleep.³¹³

Our living quarters was a shack without running water, heated by a coal stove, and we had to bathe in a ditch that was on the farm.³¹⁴

Despite the guarantees, some evacuees on agricultural work leave also encountered hostility from communities in which they worked and travelled. One evacuee was arrested and beaten by police while travelling back to Poston.³¹⁵ Another describes how local toughs made teenage evacuees crawl through the city park.³¹⁶ A survey of Manzanar returnees taken in Fall 1942 showed that the majority believed the public was "not yet ready to accept an Oriental as a U.S. citizen."³¹⁷

Still, overall, the program was judged a success. For the farmers, crops were saved. For the evacuees, it was a chance to get out of the camp and to make more than camp wages, which was particularly important for the many evacuees in increasing financial distress.³¹⁸

The success of the student and agricultural leave programs con-

tributed to the decision to attempt resettlement on a larger scale. Perhaps even more important was the appointment of a new director. On June 17, 1942, Eisenhower resigned,³¹⁹ the President appointed a new Director of WRA, Dillon Myer, who saw the program through to its conclusion. Myer felt strongly that the evacuees should be released and resettled, which led him to make resettlement a WRA priority.³²⁰

Myer did not, however, simply return to the position that the evacuees were free to leave the camps when and how they chose. On July 20, the WRA issued a carefully circumscribed relocation policy statement, which permitted relocation by Nisei who had never studied in Japan and who had a definite offer of employment outside the camps. The clearance process, which involved the WRA, FBI and other federal intelligence agencies, was lengthy, and often job offers were cancelled because clearance took so long. As a result, few evacuees were able to relocate.³²¹

In late July, the WRA established a staff committee to work out a more comprehensive policy. Importantly, one possibility considered was an all-out program permitting any evacuee to leave a center at his or her own discretion. While this would have been ideal from a civil liberties standpoint, the lack of public understanding and the earlier experience of the voluntary evacuees made such a drastic policy seem impractical both to WRA and to the Justice Department.³²²

The new rules, which became effective on October 1, 1942,³²³ over WDC objections,³²⁴ stopped far short of opening the center gates. They allowed both Issei and Nisei to apply and provided three kinds of leave: short-term leave for up to 30 days (for example, for medical purposes); work group leave (for seasonal employment); and indefinite leave for employment, education or indefinite residence outside the relocation area. To obtain indefinite leave, which was in fact relocation, a person had to show that he had a means of support and that no evidence in his files (either at the center or after a check by the FBI) showed that he might endanger national security. He needed to show his presence was likely to be acceptable where he planned to live, and to agree to inform WRA of any change of address. Special provisions applied to aliens of enemy nationality who were issued leave permits.

In his autobiography, Myer states that when these relocation regulations were issued, key WRA staff members were convinced that such a leave policy was essential for a number of reasons: discriminatory segregation would discourage loyalty; "wide and enforced deviation from normal cultural and living patterns might very well have lasting and unfavorable effects upon individuals, particularly children and young people;" the WRA had an obligation to the evacuees and to the people

of the United States to restore loyal citizens and law-abiding aliens to "a normal useful American life" with all possible speed; confinement in centers bred suspicion of evacuees; and continued confinement would help foster a new set of reservations similar to Indian reservations.³²⁵ This was the voice of that side of WRA which saw itself as the advocate of Japanese American interests, but, as usual, that voice did not speak clearly. The program conveyed the message that all Japanese were supposed to be under armed guard unless the government permitted otherwise, and even those released were granted only "indefinite leave." At least in theory, the government retained its control.

In mid-November 1942, WRA reorganized to reflect its increasing emphasis on resettlement. It brought most of its functions into the Washington office and established a series of field offices to expedite the relocation process. Seven district offices had already opened in the west; established at first to supervise the seasonal work program, they began now to promote indefinite leave. Midwestern field offices were also established, beginning on January 4, 1943, with an office in Chicago. By 1943, 42 field offices were scattered throughout the country. Myer described their important job:

In the early months these offices were primarily concerned with creating favorable community acceptance and in finding suitable jobs for evacuees and in working closely with community resettlement committees. The officers gave talks to business, professional, social, civic, church and fraternal groups. They met with employers individually and in groups, enlisted the aid of unions, and spoke to employees in plants where the employment of Japanese was contemplated. They supplied news to the press and carried on a public relations job in general.³²⁶

Organizing support among community groups and citizens to form local resettlement committees was also a WRA task during the fall of 1942.³²⁷ Church organizations in particular were involved,³²⁸ as was the Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play, organized in 1942.³²⁹

By the end of 1942, the WRA was firmly committed to a program of leave and resettlement. Manpower demands were growing, and the agricultural and student leave programs had gone well. Conditions in the camps were deteriorating. The evacuees were becoming increasingly disaffected and the original plans for large-scale agriculture and industry within the centers had been largely abandoned. Although the indefinite leave programs had not been particularly successful in resettling large numbers, the WRA was committed to getting evacuees out of the camps and into the war effort.