

I N F O R M A T I O N B U L L E T I N

JAPANESE AMERICAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Pacific Coast Branch, American Friends Service Committee
544 East Orange Grove Avenue
Pasadena, California

Number 2

March 15, 1942

GOVERNMENTAL POLICY and THE SITUATION TO DATE

Presumably 93,000 persons of Japanese birth or ancestry will be affected by the proclamation of Lt. Gen. John L. De Witt designating a strip of territory, 50 to 150 miles inland from the coast of Washington, Oregon, and California and from the Mexican border in Arizona, as Area No. I, from which they must be evacuated.

The proposal to evacuate these people to "reception camps", temporarily, in the Owens Valley and to the Parker Indian Reservation on the Arizona side of the Colorado River, preliminary to a definite resettlement, affords both the government and the people themselves a better opportunity to plan wisely and to accomplish this removal in as considerate and humane a manner as possible. About twenty-nine per cent of these folk are Issei, Japanese born, most of them too old for pioneering, but their chief concern is for their children's future. The others are Nisei, American born, who have agreed to cooperate with the authorities. They are greatly concerned for the old folks and for their younger brothers and sisters -- can this move be made in such a way as to enable these youngsters to grow up as assets, instead of liabilities to this their native land?

SUGGESTIONS FROM FRIENDS

Friends are suggesting to those in charge of this evacuation that they consider these points in carrying it out:

1. Keeping families together and communities unbroken wherever possible.
2. Relieving evacuees of the expense of removal and resettlement,
3. The appointment of a conservator of property.
4. The granting of exemptions or deferments to those too old or too ill to be moved, and to expectant mothers.
5. Arranging for college and university students of graduate and undergraduate standing to continue their studies.
6. The converting of this evacuation into permanent resettlement.

HOSTELS

For weeks, in anticipation of the sudden evacuation of Terminal Island, Friends have been preparing hostels and collecting data on all the families living there.

When the order came to evacuate within forty-eight hours, the hostels were ready and volunteer trucks and drivers available for the moving. For two days and nights they poured into the hostels, the largest single group finding refuge in "Forsythe Hostel" in Los Angeles, located in Boyle Heights. Forsythe Hostel was

formerly used as a boarding school for Mexican girls by the Presbyterian Home Mission Board, which loaned the property to the Friends for this project. It had been partially used for some years as a Japanese language school. The building is very large and houses at the moment 90 people -- 23 families, mostly women, children -- school boys and girls, and old men. Cooking is communal so far, but it is hoped that arrangements may soon be made for each family unit to be able to cook and eat separately as a family. Thirty lunches must be prepared each morning for as many school children.

In Norwalk Hostel 42 people -- 10 families -- are housed in a former language school under similar arrangements. Kiyoshi Ishikawa, the Friends pastor there, is the leader for this group as well as for the group of 25 persons -- 8 families -- in the Blue Hills Hostel a few miles further on. There is a Caucasian or two living in each Hostel.

FROM SEATTLE CENTER

Food for Japanese families in need is being collected and distributed from the Center, and thirteen visiting teams consisting usually of two white Americans and one Nisei have been going in and out of the Japanese communities extending friendship and sympathy and advice.

Here, as in Los Angeles and San Francisco, Friends prepared a written statement and presented it to the Tolan Committee -- an analysis of the whole situation with a suggestive outline of a concrete and humane solution for the whole problem.

FROM SAN FRANCISCO CENTER

The "Fair Play" Committee in the Bay area, formed last fall by Christian leaders, has helped to generate a very kindly and sympathetic feeling on the part of the general public toward the Japanese. Friends are working with the International Institute and other interested organizations in an effort to assist the Japanese, both in their present difficulties and in the evacuation and resettlement problems ahead.

"YOU CAN'T BLACK OUT THE STARS"

As night of the second day of the evacuation of Terminal Island drew on and the deadline drew ever nearer, little groups still toiled feverishly in an effort to load and move the last remnants of all the disrupted homes within the allotted time. The empty houses were dark, as the electric current had been cut off. Unable to carry flashlights, which were contraband, they finished their tasks in the gleam of flashlights held steadily for hours on end in the hands of Caucasian friends, who flocked to their aid.

In this area of vital defense, no lights shone from factories, stores or shops -- all was in total darkness. But, looking upward now and again, one could always pick out the same sure stars in their same sure places, and be strangely reassured. Suddenly, out of the darkness, a clear young voice said: "Well, at least, you can't black out the stars!"

As I turned my eyes again earthward and to the task at hand and saw the tiny gleams from many, many flashlights, throughout the narrow streets of the whole deserted little village, I said to myself, with a new upsurging of hope for these courageous people, victims of war hysteria and race prejudice, toiling away in the steady, sure light from a friendly neighbor's "lamp":

"No, thank God! You can't black out the stars!"

Note: Send news material to Gracia Booth, 544 East Orange Grove Ave., Pasadena.