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HISTORY OF THE JAPANESE-AMERICAN RELOCATION CENTER AT HUNT, MINIDOKA COUNTY, IDAHO

by

Donald E. Hausler

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

History

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1964

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INTRODUCTION

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the event which hurled the United States into the throes of the Second World War, convinced many military strategists that precautions should be taken to guard the West Coast against possible invasion. The erection of a formidable defense system along the coast was complicated by the fact that 110,000 Japanese lived in Washington, Oregon, and California, a situation that could be hardly ignored by a suspicious public who rapidly formed the opinion that most Japanese-Americans harbored disloyal attitudes and would prove to be a menace to the war effort unless measures were immediately taken to restrict their activities.

"Experts" agreed that it would be impossible to separate the loyal from the disloyal Japanese on an individual basis. Military leaders finally decided that the danger of sabotage necessitated the removal of all Japanese from the West Coast, thus eliminating in one stroke the threat of subversion. During the fall of 1942, 110,000 Japanese-Americans were evacuated from the coastal states and placed in ten detention camps situated in desolate regions of seven Western states. The original purpose of the relocation centers was to expedite resettlement, enabling evacuated Japanese to return to civilian society (outside the restricted West Coast region) as soon as their loyalty could be determined, but the majority of evacuees remained in centers for the duration of the war.

This narrative is concerned with the Minidoka Relocation Center which was located in south-east Idaho. This center was in operation from August of 1942 until October of 1945. Since all relocation centers were governed according to a fixed policy, it may be assumed that the history of Minidoka is representative of other relocation centers.

Since the hysteria engendered by the war has gradually subsided, historians can now evaluate the facts of the relocation movement from a more objective position. The decision of our government to effect relocation was without precedent. Its uniqueness lends weight to the argument that it is of considerable significance.

The constitutional questions involved in relocation are obvious, and many post-war historians are of the opinion that relocation was illegal and unjustifiable. The author neither condemns nor defends relocation since the ramifications of this problem are too complex to be dealt with in this text. It is possible to criticize the relocation program in light of the facts that are now available, but it becomes understandable when circumstances leading up to the decision are carefully analyzed.

CHAPTER I

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JAPANESE RELOCATION CENTERS

The events and forces which led to the establishment of Japanese relocation centers during the Second World War were partially determined by the pre-war position of the Japanese ethnic group in American society.[1] These people lived together in communities and created a distinct sub-culture which became a conspicuous target for racists and other groups that were offended by the intrusion of this "alien" minority into the American environment. The "peculiarity" of this foreign society engendered feelings of resentment and prejudice which later exploded into intense hatred soon after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

Having recently arrived in an unfamiliar country, Japanese immigrants were hesitant to relinquish their old ways of life, since pride in their Oriental heritage dissuaded them from freely adopting Western attitudes and modes of existence. Assimilation was greatly retarded because of the many fundamental dissimilarities which separated these two cultures. Such ethnological incongruities could not be readily reconciled by the first generation Japanese.

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[1] Information for this chapter was derived from the following sources: Barnhart, Edward N., "The Individual Exclusion of Japanese Americans in World War II," Pacific Historical Review; Tani, Henry, "The Nisei Since Pearl Harbor," The Pacific Spectator, I (Spring, 1947), 203-213; United States Department of Interior, WRA: A Story of Human Conservation, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1946; United States Department of Interior, WRA: Impounded People--Japanese Americans in the Relocation Centers, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1946.

Japanese aliens usually congregated in settlements along the Western Coast. Still clinging to Nipponese customs and beliefs, they attempted to preserve the attitudes and institutions which were venerated in their mother country. Language schools were established, and clubs and organizations perpetuated native practices and rituals. Consequently the second generation was able to absorb many of the culture patterns which had been transplanted by their parents. This condition naturally impeded amalgamation and isolated the Japanese from the rest of American society.

Japanese-Americans are commonly divided into two categories; the original immigrants, or first generation Japanese, are called the Issei, while the second generation is referred to as the Nisei. The latter class consists of native-born residents of the United States. The Issei, barred from United States citizenship by the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1907, were hesitant to depart from those ways of life with which they were familiar. The Nisei, however, adapted to American customs much more readily and, unlike their parents, learned to speak English.

Although these people were industrious and conscientious workers, many occupations were closed to them because certain groups resented their competition. Consequently the Japanese gravitated toward those endeavors which seemed to promise them relatively unhindered advancement. It was also expedient for them to pursue a line of work in which they were already proficient. Therefore, many turned to agriculture, while others became engaged in the handling of Far Eastern commodities. The Nisei who entered the latter occupation frequently returned to Japan in order to develop a more comprehensive background in the field of

Oriental trade. Such educational sojourns were later to take on sinister implications in the eyes of some American patriots.

The intense feelings of prejudice towards persons of Japanese parentage that rose after the beginning of World War II had a definite foundation, since many pressure groups had for years been antagonistic toward Japanese-Americans. The Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West, The American Legion, and The Associated Farmers of California, as well as some politicians, had long resented the presence of the Japanese. The Hearst press had campaigned for years against the "Yellow Peril" which was supposedly trying to engulf the world. Thus, this movement manifested itself long before World War II, although its promoters were yet a minority group.

Hysteria Following Pearl Harbor

The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, served to give impetus and momentum to these anti-Japanese factions, since their prejudice now had a tangible basis. Acting as a catalyst, this event accelerated the development of these forces of resentment and animosity, unifying them into a formidable bloc.

Immediately after Pearl Harbor, rumors as to Issei and Nisei collusion with the enemy were rampant, and it was believed by many that a fifth column movement of Japanese nationalists had betrayed the country by revealing strategic information to the enemy. These rumors were thought to be supported by the fact that the invaders seemed to know the precise location of United States military installations in the Hawaiian Islands. Even though such stories were unsubstantiated, they exerted a definite influence on the public, supporting the convictions of those who believed that people of Japanese ancestry were not to be trusted.

During the months following Pearl Harbor, the national government took measures to prevent anticipated sabotage on the West Coast, since it was believed that this area contained potential saboteurs. Aliens were required to register with the government, receiving identification cards which were to be carried at all times. Certain articles in the possession of aliens were considered contraband; cameras, radios, and guns were seized as a result of raids made by federal agents. An eight o'clock curfew was imposed upon person of Japanese descent, and they were not allowed to venture beyond a five-mile radius from their homes.

An intensive search for enemy supporters was conducted, and aliens believed to be disloyal were arrested. There were those who did not think the F.B.I. was successfully combating the threat of espionage, and authorities in California received incessant phone calls from patriotic citizens reporting the suspicious activities of their Oriental neighbors.

The newspapers reported the arrests and seizures that were being made in ever-increasing numbers. These articles naturally enhanced the growing opinion that a subversive element existed in the population. Editorials also appeared which intensified this phobia.

The presence of Japanese in the vicinity of seaports, railways, airfields, and naval bases convinced military authorities that aliens were preparing to subvert the war effort. It was assumed that they had infiltrated these strategic areas deliberately, preparing for a campaign of wide and general devastation. Although socio-economic forces had actually determined the confines of Japanese settlements, suspicious patriots considered this to be an ominous sign of infiltration and impending sabotage.

Other manifestations seemed to suggest that a conspiracy existed. The presence of American-raised Nisei in Japan appeared to be a definite indication of traitorous dealings, even though they had journeyed to that country for the purpose of receiving an advanced education in the field of Oriental trade. On February 4, 1942, Senator Guy Gillette of Iowa asserted that certain Japanese societies were posing as cultural clubs and chambers of commerce. Hiding behind a facade of respectability, these subversive organizations, he claimed, collaborated with the enemy and plotted unknown mischief.

The fact that sabotage had not yet occurred did not reduce the mounting tension. It was believed that saboteurs were patiently waiting for an opportune moment to strike, meanwhile making preparations for a concerted attack. This fear was expressed by Earl Warren, Attorney General of California:

> If we think sabotage has not been planned for us, we are living in a fool's paradise. The most convincing proof of a real plan is the fact we have had no sabotage yet. This is the most ominous sign.[1]

Evacuation

In early February of 1942, diverse pressure groups clamored for the complete evacuation of all Japanese from the West Coast, insisting that counter-espionage activities had failed to arrest the threat of subversion and intrigue. A committee of Pacific Coast Congressmen, led by California Senator Hiram Johnson, pressed earnestly for this plan of eviction, advising President Roosevelt that this solution would erase the existing menace. The Hearst press actively supported the total removal of Japanese from the Coast, predicting that race riots and violence would ensue if this minority group was allowed to remain in the midst of growing public hostility. The House Committee on Un-American Activities expressed its concern over the Japanese problem, proposing that these people be removed to an isolated inland region. Other groups offered more radical suggestions. The American Legion in California and the Native Sons of the Golden West demanded that all Japanese-Americans be repatriated.

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[1] Salt Lake Tribune, February 22, 1942.

These solutions were founded on the argument that the Japanese were a mysterious and treacherous people, which made it impossible to separate the loyal from the disloyal on an individual basis. It was also pointed out that under Japanese law, a child born of Japanese parents was automatically a citizen of Japan, regardless of his place of birth. This created the problem of dual citizenship, which many believed would tend to foster disloyalty. Army General John De Witt expressed the feelings of many when he declared that Japanese-Americans could never be trusted because they were members of an enemy race.

> In the war in which we are now engaged racial affinities are not severed by migration. The Japanese race is an enemy race, and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States Citizenship, have become "Americanized," the racial strains are undiluted.[1]

---

[1] Eugene Rostow, "Our Worst Wartime Mistake," Harper's Magazine, CXCI (September, 1945), p. 195.

Those who questioned the legality of such a drastic decree were silenced by the general hysteria. The need for internal security seemed to justify such extreme action. This meant, of course, that rights guaranteed by the Constitution would have to be suspended. The concept that a racial group could be presumed to possess subversive ideas which would require its imprisonment was unique, but the emergency engendered by the war superseded all consideration of minority rights. The following editorial comment expressed the growing fear that citizenship and civil rights were serving to protect insidious enemy sympathizers, "Enemy aliens, potential spies and preachers of disloyalty live in security and carry on their nefarious activities under the flimsy protection of papers and citizenship."[1]

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt yielded to the pleas of military advisors and pressure groups. The President issued an executive order which authorized generals to establish restricted military areas from which they could expel all persons considered dangerous to the national security. John De Witt, Commanding General of the Western Defense Command, immediately declared that mass expulsion of Japanese-Americans from the Coast was a military necessity. He justified this decision by stating that there was:

> . . . no ground for assuming that Japanese-Americans will not turn against the United States. It therefore follows that along the vital Pacific Coast over 112,000 potential enemies, of Japanese extraction, are at large today. There are disturbing indications that these are organized and ready for concerted action at a favorable opportunity. The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken.[2]

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[1] Salt Lake Tribune, February 23, 1942.

[2] Rostow, op.cit., p. 196.

Thus, military authorities were convinced that there was not time to conduct individual investigations. Only mass evacuation would completely eliminate the danger.

Armed with the executive order issued by Roosevelt, General De Witt on March 2, announced that all Japanese would be removed from an area which extended about one hundred miles inland along the Pacific Coast. This sweeping decree meant that 112,000 Japanese would have to leave this forbidden zone, including men, women, and children. They were given less than a month to leave. All Japanese remaining along the Coast after March 29, were to be arrested.

The Japanese reacted to this decree with bitterness and disillusionment. The prospect of being uprooted and driven from their communities was terrifying, and it was small comfort to know that they would face the future in the company of friends and relatives. Evacuation was supposed to be voluntary, but it was impossible for the majority of Japanese to make this exodus in the time limit allowed. Many desperately tried to sell their property and possessions, close out their businesses, and liquidate their assets. This was done in the greatest of haste, and the result was confusion and chaos. In order to expedite the operation, the government offered to give financial assistance to the emigres, but by this time the Japanese were understandably distrustful of the government.

Within three weeks following the fatal proclamation, 8,000 Japanese began the long march eastward. Other areas, however, did not readily welcome these unfortunate migrants. Many states were reluctant to receive people who were considered by the military authorities to be potential spies. Some were intercepted along the Arizona border and advised to venture elsewhere. Kansas patrolmen would not let them pass through the state. Nevada and Wyoming refused to admit these people who belonged to the "enemy race." Former Governor Clyde Tingley of New Mexico expressed his disapproval of invading Japanese evacuees in the most offensive language. "California can keep her Japs," he said, "as far as I'm concerned I would rather give General MacArthur a dozen more planes and send all the Japs here to the Bataan Peninsula."[1] Governor Maw of Utah had a more tolerant attitude; he allowed migrating Japanese to settle in the state on the condition that they remain in remote regions, and the local residents had no objections.

It soon became obvious that the plan of voluntary evacuation was unworkable, and a more realistic solution was sought. The migration of so many unwanted persons had an undesirable effect, since it was difficult for the wandering Japanese to obtain employment or proper living accomodations. By the end of March random evacuation was discontinued.

The Establishment of Relocation Centers

A compulsory system of internment was inaugurated, designed to expedite the evacuation process. This comprehensive plan called for the creation of detention centers where the displaced Japanese could be temporarily confined. The Wartime Civil Control Administration (W.C.C.A.), which had recently been established by De Witt, supervised this new plan of systematized evacuation. As a result of this change in policy, the Japanese remaining in the forbidden military zones were instructed to proceed to guarded camps called assembly centers. These camps served as temporary internment areas where the evacuees were kept under surveillance until more permanent relocation centers could be erected.

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[1] Salt Lake Tribune, March 6, 1942.

These assembly centers, located at various places along the Coast, had been hastily built to accommodate the displaced Japanese. Within two months one hundred thousand people were herded into eighteen of these wretched enclosures. They lived a communal existence in rudely built barracks. Cramped quarters deprived them of all privacy, and they were subjected to a life of regimentation and restriction. The prisoners were forbidden to converse in Japanese; roll calls and searches were conducted daily. All visitors were carefully screened, and guards probed for contraband.

However, the Japanese endured this humiliating treatment with patience and forbearance. Some occupied their time by working at different crafts and hobbies. A recreation program helped to prevent idleness, and a makeshift educational program was instituted and administered by the evacuees. These occupations enlivened an otherwise routine existence.

Meanwhile, the War Relocation Authority (W.R.A.) was busily erecting permanent relocation centers which were situated in desolate areas in seven Western states. Although most of these states had protested the presence of these settlements in their domain, the relocation plan was eventually put into operation. These centers were located in federally-owned regions of Arkansas, California, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. According to the tentative evacuation policy of the War Relocation Authority, the Japanese were to be confined in these crude villages for the remainder of the war, or until they could be examined individually. They would be released only after their loyalty could be definitely determined.

By November of 1942, all the displaced Japanese had been removed from the assembly areas, placed in trains, and transported to the relocation centers. These camps were heavily guarded and enclosed by barbed-wire, accommodating 7,000 to 18,000 people each. The majority of the evacuees were destined to remain in these compact tarpaper communities for the remainder of the war.

Table 1. War Relocation Centers[a]

Name of Center	Location	Opening Date
Manzanar	Manzanar, Inyo County, California	March 21, 1942
Colorado River	Poston, Yuma County, Arizona	May 8, 1942
Tule Lake	Newell, Modoc County, California	May 27, 1942
Gila River	Rivers, Pinal County, Arizona	July 20, 1942
Minidoka	Hunt, Jerome County, Idaho	August 10, 1942
Heart Mountain	Heart Mountain, Park County, Wyoming	August 12, 1942
Granada	Amache, Prowers County, Colorado	August 27, 1942
Central Utah	Topaz, Millard County, Utah	September 11, 1942
Rohwer	McCehee, Desha County, Arkansas	September 18, 1942
Jerome	Denson, Drew and Chicot Counties, Arkansas	October 6, 1942

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[a] United States Department of Interior, WRA: A Story of Human Conservation (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1946), p. 197.

The evacuation of the West Coast was only the first phase of the relocation program. The resettlement of the evacuees after they had been moved to the centers was the next major goal of the WRA. However, military authorities were slow in implementing a policy of rapid resettlement, preferring to keep the majority of Japanese-Americans behind barbed wire where they could be kept under close surveillance.

CHAPTER II

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MINIDOKA RELOCATION CENTER

In April of 1942, the War Relocation Authority set aside 68,000 acres of arid land in a desolate area of south-central Idaho for the establishment of the Minidoka Relocation Center.[1] This northernmost colony was situated between the Sawtooth range of mountains and the Snake River in a wilderness of sagebrush and sand. The site was at an elevation of 3,800 feet, near the towns of Twin Falls, Rupert, and Jerome. The climate in this region is extremely variable. The summers are dry and uncomfortably warm, while during the winter months subfreezing days and nights are not uncommon.[2] The growing season is relatively short, but the soil is fertile and, if properly irrigated, is capable of supporting a wide variety of crops.

Construction

Construction began at Minidoka in the early summer of 1942. A crew of 3,000 men under the supervision of the Army Engineers hastily erected over 500 wooden buildings. The community was divided into thirty-five blocks of geometrically arranged barracks, sprawling over an area that was three and a half miles long and one mile wide.

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[1] Information for this chapter was derived from the following sources: Minidoka Irrigator; Stafford, Harry L., "Project Director's Nattative," Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho; Twin Falls Times

[2] During the winter of 1942, Rupert recorded a low of 21 degrees below zero; in July of the same year the temperature reached a high of 104 degrees.

Each block in the residential section had fifteen barracks and was designed to function as a social unit. One building was to serve as a recreation hall; one incorporated a laundry room and a bathhouse; one was to be used as a dining hall. Block residents would be required to share these facilities. The remaining twelve houses were divided into six one-room apartments. A block was capable of accommodating 250 people. Rectangular barracks were partitioned to serve as apartment houses for the evacuees. The city was to be equipped with a hospital, an administration building, fire stations, schools, a library, a newspaper office, and a post office.

The Arrival of Evacuees

Most of the evacuees who were sent to Minidoka originally resided in Washington and Oregon. Following DeWitt's decision to implement a compulsory system of evacuation, assembly camps were set up in these states. Improvised fairgrounds adjacent to Seattle served as the Puyallup Assembly Center and contained over 7,000 Japanese by July of 1942. The Portland Assembly Center held over 3,000. Evacuees lived in these camps while the community of Minidoka was under construction. In August and September of 1942, the Japanese colonists were removed from these assembly camps and transported by rail to the Minidoka Relocation Center.

An advanced group of 213 Japanese arrived at Minidoka on August 10, 1942, having volunteered to prepare the center for occupancy.[1]

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, August 5, 1944, p. 2.

On August 16, a second group of Japanese from the Portland Assembly Center arrived at Minidoka after a train ride that was described by one colonist as being "dirty, wearying, and comfortless."[1] During the next three weeks, train loads of Japanese arrived almost daily, and by the end of August the center contained 3,700 evacuees. By September 13, the mass movement was almost completed. The population was now approaching 9,500, and Minidoka was now the eighth largest city in Idaho.[2]

The following schedule lists the arrival dates and size of the various groups of colonists who were relegated to the Minidoka Relocation Center during August and September of 1942.

Table 2. Arrival Date and Size of Group[a]

Date of Arrival	Size of Group	Date of Arrival	Size of Group
August 10	213	September 1	503
August 16	493	September 2	525
August 17	516	September 3	505
August 18	508	September 4	412
August 19	524	September 5	297
August 20	511	September 6	500
August 21	525	September 7	494
August 22	516	September 8	501
August 30	517	September 10	506
August 31	512	September 11	317
		September 14	92

[a] Minidoka Relocation Center, "History of Hunt," August 1, 1944, p. 2.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, September 25, 1943, p. 2.

[2] Twin Falls Times, October 4, 1942, p. 3.

Problems of Settlement

Since the project was only partially completed when the evacuees arrived, the settlement period of Minidoka's history was fraught with confusion and suffering. Many of the barracks were unfinished, and for many months the housing problem prevented the colonists from becoming properly situated. The sewage system had not yet been installed, and the inhabitants were forced to use unsanitary outdoor latrines.[1] A shortage of stoves and coal caused considerable distress during the winter months.[2] There was no hot water, and the water that was available contained so much chlorine that it was practically undrinkable.[3] Mess halls were not supplied with sufficient cooking facilities, and some residents were compelled to dine in neighboring dining halls. These wretched conditions were not noticeably improved for several weeks.

Housing

The housing shortage was perhaps the most perplexing problem of the occupancy period, since it made orderly settlement impossible. The Superintendent of Housing described the futility of trying to find adequate shelter for the arriving evacuees:

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[1] War Relocation Authority, Third Quarterly Report, Oct. 1 to Dec. 1, 1942. p. 61.

[2] Spicer, E. H., "Report on an Unorganized Relocation Center," Project Analysis Series No. 6, Community Analysis Section. p. 6.

[3] Minidoka Irrigator, September 25, 1943. p. 4.

> August 22, 1942 was the most miserable day of my life. The army's 500 people, mostly family groups, were moved in and I had exactly nine apartments available. I put the nine largest families in the apartments and then had to dump the rest of the families into recreation halls and dormitories. The mess was terrific.[1]

The housing office staff was constantly harrassed by irate Japanese demanding private quarters. Families that did not have private apartments shared rooms with strangers, and recreation halls were temporarily used as bachelors' quarters.[2] Residents of one block were forced to move after the administration decided to convert their apartments into schoolrooms, whereupon the evicted Japanese armed themselves with knives and axes, marched to the housing office, and threatened the staff.[3] The housing situation remained critical for many months, and the last barracks were not finished until the middle of December.

Since the WRA was unwilling to supply furniture for apartments, residents were compelled to build their own. The most simple materials were used, and improvised creations were fashioned out of discarded scraps of wood and even sagebrush. They filched lumber from unguarded stockpiles, absconded with bits of wood, and managed to piece together rude chairs, tables, cabinets, and other furnishings with considerable skill.[4]

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[1] Huyche, Lorne, "Moving and Housing," November 12, 1942. p. 1.

[2] Privacy was at such a minimum in some of the unpartitioned barracks that women refused to undress when the time came to retire.

[3] "Statistical Functional Report of Community Government," Final Report of Chairman of the Community Council. Compiled by I. Oyama.

[4] Minidoka Irrigator, September 25, 1943. p. 4.

Beautification

The WRA had made no attempt to beautify the premises. The center was totally devoid of vegetation (aside from clumps of gnarled sagebrush), and the treeless, shrubless, dusty streets and sidewalks, and barren plots of ground gave this war-born city a grim and bleak appearance. The thick layer of dust which covered the ground became quite menacing when stirred by wind, trucks, or mischievous children. Since Minidoka was going to be their home for an indefinite period of time, residents refused to tolerate these conditions, and immediately embarked upon a campaign to improve the appearance of the center.

The colonists experienced great difficulty in obtaining a suitable quantity of vegetation. Some had brought little plants to the center. Vines, ferns, and perhaps a few flowers were carefully nourished and planted along the sidewalks and between the barracks.[1] Grass was planted in many areas, and a few large trees, donated by thoughtful Jerome and Twin Falls residents, were brought into the center.[2] The search for greenery was extensive.

> They wandered into the sagebrush and walked along the irrigation canal bordering the center. Bit by bit they brought home clumps of grass, mint plants, cattail reeds, and willows. Some found cactus and desert moss . . .[3]

Diverse forms of vegetation were placed in gardens watered by a series of irrigation canals. The beautification of Minidoka helped to camouflage the severe nature of the community.

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[1] Hosokawa, Robert, "Minidoka Report No. 9," October 29, 1942. p. 1.

[2] Twin Falls Times, April 12, 1943.

[3] Hosokawa, Robert, op. cit. p. 1.

Health

There were disturbing indications that the barracks existance, with its crowded living quarters and unsanitary toilet facilities, was having an adverse effect upon the general health of the community. The first large scale epidemic occurred on September 23, 1942.[1] Over 60 persons were hospitalized due to an outbreak of ptomaine poinsoning in one of the mess halls. Widespread intestinal flu plagued the colonists. In February of 1943, several residents were found to be infected with gonorrhea. Since male residents did not have the disease, doctors concluded that outdoor latrines transmitted the infection.[2] Ironically, a state health inspector visited Minidoka in November of 1942, and reported that conditions were "entirely satisfactory."[3]

Food

The daily diet of the colonists may have been wholesome, but it was decidedly monotonous. The WRA insisted that expenditures for food should not exceed $.45 per day per person. As could be imagined, few were satisfied with the daily diet and the way the food was prepared. The following quote would seem to indicate that the food was not too appealing:

> The food was horrible from first to last. We had the usual 45 cent per day per person food allowance but they could never spend more than 25 or 26 cents. The full measure was ordered but the food just wasn't moved in. The result was

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[1] _Minidoka Irrigator_, September 25, 1942.

[2] "Minidoka Report No. 23," February 12, 1943.

[3] _Twin Falls Times_, November 12, 1942.

> slop. The barbage cans were always full. One day at supper, ten young men walked into the mess hall, sat down, and when there [sic] food was served, got up without testing it, walked out to the garbage pails, and dumped their food in.[1]

A food rationing program went into effect in December of 1942, imposing further restrictions upon the variety and quantity of food that was served. As a result the Minidoka Irrigator reported that, "we are feeling the far-reaching arms of the government's rationing program. There is less of almost every conceivable food item on the menus, particularly sugar, meat, milk, butter, and eggs."[2]

Aside from these shortages, the task of feeding 9,000 people was formidable, a situation that was further complicated by the fact that mess halls were not supplied with sufficient cooking facilities when the evacuees first arrived. In November of 1942, the following amounts of food were consumed daily: 4,000 pounds of rice, 900 gallons of milk, 3,500 pounds of meat, 4,400 loaves of bread, and 1,126 dozen eggs.[3] Thirty-five mess halls were needed to handle this operation. Food was cooked on coal-burning Army stoves. Both Japanese and American-style dishes were served. First generation Japanese preferred Japanese food while the Nisei were quite satisfied with American food.

The fence incident

In November of 1942, an incident occurred which disrupted the peace of the community. Much to the amazement of the colonists, workers began to erect a barbed wire fence around the perimeter of the city. Eight watch towers were also raised, and Minidoka rapidly took on the appearance of a concentration camp. Although the administration claimed that the watch towers would be used as fire lookouts, the inhabitants were convinced that they were designed to a serve a sinister purpose.[1] The barbed wire fence was also more than "a line of demarcation of the center limits."[2] It was symoblic of their imprisoned state. Most of the inhabitants had felt from the beginning that the Japanese exclusion order was unconstitutional, and they did not think that they should be regarded as prisoners or subjected to humiliating treatment.

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[1] Huyche, Lorne, op. cit., p. 2.

[2] Minidoka Irrigator, January 2, 1943.

[3] Ibid., November 14, 1942.

As the fence was raised, astonishment among the residents soon gave way to resentment, and resentment to outrage. The Japanese believed that they had been on their honor to remain within the city limits.[3] This barrier now compelled them to do so, and they began to feel like prisoners. Some of the more aggressive colonists, in order to emphasize the fact that the residents would not sit idly by while their freedoms were being curtailed, retaliated by cutting the wire and uprooting the fenceposts. The contractor who was responsible for the completion of the fence was disturbed by these overt acts of sabotage, and responded by attaching a generatore to the barbed wire, giving it an electric charge. This was done without the knowledge or consent of the administration, but it immediately precipitated a crises. News of the electrified fence spread rapidly, and the residents were on the verge of riot.[1] The generator was disconnected as soon as the Project Director was informed; however, the Japanese could not be easily pacified. Various attempts to combat the fence legally were pursued. The Fair Labor Board decided to campaign against its presence, and the residents of several blocks met and agreed to take the issue to the WRA.[2] The administration apologized for this unfortunate occurrence but was careful to warn the people that the destruction of government property was a serious offense. Construction of the fence was resumed.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, October 31, 1942.

[2] Ibid., November 7, 1942. p. 1.

[3] U. S. War Relocation Authority, "Project Analysis Series No. 4," April, 1943. p. 2.

Summary of the Occupational Period

The occupational period of Minidoka's history was, for most residents, an unmitigated ordeal accompanied by real suffering, but it was endured with a minimum of resistence or complaint. The residents for the most part cooperated with the administration. Excessive demands and riotous demonstrations were unknown. As long as the Japanese had adequate food and shelter and were treated justly, a discipline problem was non-existent. However, protests were voiced at infrequent intervals, usually when the administration or the WRA imposed unwarranted measures that indicated hostility or contempt towards the Japanese. Although it took several months for conditions to become relatively settled, the evacuees were determined to transform Minidoka into a progressive community.

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[1] U. S. War Relocation Authority, Project Analysis Series No. 4," April, 1943, p. 2.

[2] Minidoka Irrigator, November 18, 1942.

CHAPTER III

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES

Soon after the last group of evacuees arrived at Minidoka, a comprehensive program, outlined by the WRA, was set into operation by the project administration.[1] The plan called for the establishment of social, economic, political, and educational institutions. These organizations were designed to raise the relocation center from the status of a refugee camp to that of a progressive civilian community.[2]

Self-government

Early in September the Project Director, Harry Stafford, revealed a plan through which the residents of Minidoka could establish a system of self-government. According to a prescribed procedure, popularly elected delegates appointed a committee of seven men who in turn were to draft a charter. This constitution would become effective only after it was approved by the WRA and submitted to the colonists for ratification. Many Japanese were skeptical of the proposal because evacuee government would necessarily be subordinate to the WRA. Nevertheless, under the guidance of the administration, steps were taken toward instituting responsible government.

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[1] Information for this chapter was derived from the following Sources: "Historical Narrative Report of the Community Management Division: Education Section, Minidoka Project Schools," War Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho, December 15, 1945; Sakoda, James, Minidoka: An Analysis of Changing Patterns of Social Interaction, an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1955; Spicer, E. H., "Report on an Unorganized Relocation Center," Project Analysis Series No. 6, Community Analysis Section.

[2] Spicer, E. H., "Report on an Unorganized Relocation Center," Project Analysis Series No. 6, Community Analysis Section. p. 1.

Early efforts to establish a system of self-government at Minidoka met with little success due to general public apathy and what can only be regarded as obstruction on the part of the administration. The committee which had been elected to compose a charter of community government was not given the necessary power to draft a meaningful constitution, since the WRA had practically predetermined the function of evacuee government. Several restrictions were placed upon the planned charter which meant that community government would have to be subordinate to the administration. City government would be able to submit proposals to the administration, thus serving as an organ of public opinion, but in the final analysis the Project Director would determine center policy. One restriction imposed upon the charter was that the Issei were ineligible for office. Also, before a charter could be submitted to the residents for ratification, it had to meet with the approval of the Project Director. It was extremely difficult for the committee to propose a system of government that would be acceptable to both the administration and the community.

By the middle of November, 1942, the committee had devised a charter, and it was subsequently presented to the Project Director for his approval. Stafford waited for two and a half months before he informed the committee that conditions on the outside necessitated the postponement of evacuee government for an indefinite period of time. Stafford maintained that outside public opinion was opposed to such a plan. The occurrence of demonstrations in other centers convinced him that the colonists were not mature enough to participate in the affairs of the community.[1] However, it was obvious that he was loathe to relinquish the least amount of authority into the hands of the residents. Thus, the administration frustrated the first attempt at self-government.

For the next several months the colony was ruled by a "benevolent" dictatorial system based on the assumption that the administration knew what was best for the residents.[2] Block Managers, appointed by the administration, conducted the affairs of the center incident to community living, but they were regarded as "stooges" and "WRA dogs" by the populace.[3] It was difficult for a healthy relationship to exist between the residents and administration as long as the former were deprived of all political power.

By March of 1943, interest in self-government had revived. Different proposals were examined and discussed by the Committee in an effort to draft a charter that would be acceptable to the administration as well as the residents. By the end of May a new plan of self-government was submitted to the Project Director, and it was subsequently approved. According to the charter, the governing body would consist of a seven-man Community Advisory Council. The Council was to be popularly elected, and its primary function was to submit recommendations to the Project Director.

Special block meetings were held in order to explain the details of the proposed charter to the colonists. On June 15, 1943, residents voted, but ratification of the charter was rejected by a vote of 1,568 for, and 2,375 against.[1] Several reasons were advanced for the defeat of the charter. First, Minidoka had operated without a representative body for many months, and some argued that it would be foolish to upset the existing order. Second, it was known that several members of the administration disapproved of self-government: therefore, many colonists thought that harmony could be preserved only if the charter was rejected. Third, some residents complained that the block delegates had not satisfactorily explained the new charter. Fourth, the charter was unveiled to the public only four days before the election, which was insufficient time for the residents to study the document. Fifth, the majority of the residents were apathetic toward the charter and were unconvinced that it would improve conditions.[2]

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[1] Spicer, E. H., op. cit., p. 8.

[2] Sakoda, James, Minidoka: An Analysis of Changing Patterns of Social Interaction. p. 104.

[3] "Statistical-Functional Report of Community Government," Final Report of Chairman of the Community Council, compiled by I. Oyama. p. 4.

It was not until November of 1943, that the delegates were able to write another charter. Having met with the approval of the administration, the charter was again submitted to the public for ratification. An overwhelming majority of the populace voted for the document (2,657 for and 686 against), which seemed to indicate that the community had finally realized the desirability of having some voice, however feeble, in the operation of the center.

The new instrument of government called for the formation of a popularly elected council which was empowered to perform the following duties:

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[1] Oyama, I., op. cit., p. 10.

[2] Minidoka Irrigator, January 1, 1944.

1) Submit recommendations to the Project Director.

2) Organize committees to assist the Council in its activities.

3) Determine the rules of discipline under which it would operate. In addition the charter established an arbitration committee which was to settle disagreements between colonists upon the referral of the Council of the Project Director. Lastly, a Judicial Commission was created, consisting of five members selected by the Community Council with the approval of the Project Director. This commission was to advise the Council on matters pertaining to the preservation of law and order in the community.[1]

The new government (the first Community Council was elected February 14, 1944)[2] tried to cope with some of the problems that had rankled the community since the center's inception. During its existence evacuee government encountered and dealt with various disorders and grievances, although the Council was unable to influence center policy unless it received full cooperation from the administration. Since this was rarely forthcoming, the venture into self-government was practically doomed from the beginning. However, it served admirably as a liaison board between the staff and the evacuees, and suggestions offered by the Council were sometimes seriously considered by the administration.

The Council set up committees to investigate conditions in areas of vital concern to the people in an effort to seek ways to make life more comfortable for the residents. In accordance with the Constitution, the Community Council appointed committees to deal with food, health, housing, employment, and public relations. These committees functioned with varying success, but at least they succeeded in focusing attention upon glaring problems and injustices.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, December 4, 1943. p. 1.

[2] Oyama, I., op. cit., p. 10.

The Food Committee was assigned to examine mess hall operations, having received complaints that not all dishes served proved to be edible.[1] Several Minidokans criticized the daily menu, especially since fruits and vegetables were not always available or of the highest quality. Mess hall equipment was found to be defective and inadequate in many instances. However, due to strict rationing and difficulties in securing certain foods, the Food Committee was severely restricted in what it could accomplish. The administration was determined to adhere to the 45 cent per day per person limitation on food. Needless to say not much was done in regard to this grievance.[2] Recommendations raised and submitted by this committee were disregarded, but the administration was faced with the fact that mess hall conditions were under attack.

A Health Committee was appointed to investigate health conditions in the center. Some of the more flagrant health hazards were revealed and brought to the attention of the administration. The center water supply, derived from two wells, proved to be contaminated. Relations between the hospital staff and evacuee helpers were reviewed, since there had been reoccurring conflicts in this department. Difficulties involving the collection of garbage had resulted in unsightly and unsanitary refuse, and the committee endeavored to offer recommendations that would eliminate this health problem.[1]

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[1] Oyama, I., op. cit., p. 13.

[2] Ibid.

The Housing Committee encountered various obstacles in trying to satisfy numerous complaints regarding living conditions, but as the population dwindled, due to the exodus of farm workers and enlistees, the housing situation becamse manageable. On October 4, 1944, the administration informed the Housing Committee that the residents of one of the blocks would have to be evicted in order to provide room for additional office space and play room facilities. Japanese affected by this scheme were outraged and the Housing Office was swamped with complaints. Realizing that evacuee relations with the administration would be severely strained if this proposal went into effect, the Housing Committee advised the administration to heed the opposition and refrain from distrubing the tranquility of the community. The administration followed this suggestion and the crisis passed.[2]

The Education Committee supposedly operated in an advisory capacity, but the WRA school administration was reluctant to implement its suggestions. Requests for separate latrines for school children were ignored. A severe discipline problem with high school students caused the committee to offer a plan that called for the construction of a recreation hall for teenagers. After much delay and hesitation, the administration finally built a teen-age canteen in the Spring of 1945, only a few months before the center closed.[3] This did not eliminate teen-age vandalism, but at least students now had a place to congregate.

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[1] Ibid., p. 23.

[2] Ibid., p. 26.

[3] Ibid., p. 27.

The Education Committee also thought that elementary school children should have play rooms so that they could be kept off the streets. This proposal was disregarded. The WRA school administration also turned down a suggestion that the Japanese language be taught as an optional foreign language in the high schools.

The Public Relations Committee was in charge of public activities on the project. Memorial services for both civilians and Japanese soldiers in the U. S. Armed Forces were conducted upon occasion with great solemnity. The demise of President Roosevelt was mourned in a special service.[1]

Labor problems in the community were investigated by the Employment Committee, but the WRA prevented it from asserting any authority. Hence, this body was unable to assume any prominence and it practically ceased to function during the last months of the center's existence.

The Community Council, being a representative body, was naturally expected (as far as the residents were concerned) to voice the will of the community, although this might be at variance with administration policy. The project staff had little respect for community government, being convinced that it should be used merely as a tool to implement policy or to convert residents over to the administration's point of view. When the Council tried to express divergent views in regard to a specific issue, or if it tried to remain neutral when confronted with a particular problem, the administration would accuse it of being non-cooperative and obstructive.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 31.

[2] Ibid., p. 32.

Many residents were disappointed at the limited success of evacuee government. The failure of self-government, to the extent that it could be considered a failure, was a result of obstructive tactics employed by the administration. The Council was often presented with problems of a contradictory nature that proved impossible to solve. The Council was never allowed to meet conjointly with the administration so that various problems could be discussed and worked out to the satisfaction of both (if, indeed, such a thing was possible).[1] Several times Council members were subjected to undue pressure from the administration to act swiftly on a specific proposal, which, at times, they were reluctant to do, desiring more time to weigh and investigate the matter in question. Lastly, the administration expected the Council to support the unpopular rapid relocation program, which advocated that evacuees be pressured into leaving the center at the earliest opportunity. This policy was severely criticized by residents, and it was dangerous for the Council to join forces with the staff on this measure, lest it lose whatever prestige it then possessed.[2] Because the administration refused to allow the Council to function as a policy-making body, Minidoka's plunge into self-government turned out to be a fiasco, and, as predicted, it never amounted to more than an advisory body devoid of authority.

Education

The administration's attempt to introduce an effective educational system at Minidoka fared badly. The WRA had originally planned to provide the center with proper school buildings; however, necessary materials were not forthcoming, and ordinary barracks had to be altered and partitioned into makeshift classrooms.[1] Mess hall tables and uncomfortable benches served as desks and work tables. Supplies and equipment could not be acquired easily. Textbooks were scarce and those that were available, because of their age, could not be readily adapted for classroom use.[2] A sufficient number of qualified teachers could not be persuaded to come to Minidoka, and several evacuees had to be rushed through a teacher-training program in order to fill the quota.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 33.

[2] Ibid.

When Minidoka's two elementary schools opened on October 19, 1942, 776 pupils and a faculty of ten teachers were present. Stafford Elementary School had thirteen rooms and an enrollment of 447; Hunt Elementary School had nine rooms and 329 pupils. Five nursery schools, located in recreation halls and staffed by evacuees, were opened to children not of school age.[4]

Hunt High School consisted of one square block of tarpaper covered barracks, 20 feet by 120 feet, partitioned into 32 classrooms in order to accommodate 1200 students. A dining hall served as an auditorium; a laundry room was converted into a science laboratory, and some classes were held in the kitchen of a mess hall.[5] A Minidoka teacher graphically described the depressing conditions under which Hunt High School opened:

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[1] "Historical Narrative Report of the Community Management Division: Education Section, Minidoka Project Schools." War Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho. December 15, 1945. p. 6.

[2] Ibid., p. 7.

[3] Minidoka Irrigator, September 29, 1942.

[4] Historical Narrative Report, op. cit., p. 7.

[5] Ibid., p. 13.

> When school first opened at Minidoka, in the fall of 1942 the children walked hesitantly into the tarpaper shacks that were to be their classrooms. They looked around for the familiar blackboard and found none, for desks, and found only rudely constructed tables and benches without backs, for books, and saw a heterogeneous collection unrelated to their needs. Moreover, they found only a few teachers--not enough to go around . . . . From one crude building to the other they waded through slush and mud, which became so deep and sticky as to be almost impassable . . . . Some days, classes had to be suspended because of the dust storms sweeping around and into the buildings . . .[1]

Courses were for the most part selected from an educational guide that had been prepared for the WRA by a group of Stanford University students.[2] The curriculum emphasized classes in Americanization and democracy. Students could not readily absorb lessons which extolled the virtues of the system which had deprived them of their homes and their freedom. They therefore did not respond as enthusiastically as they might have done under more favorable circumstances.

In many respects the attempt to establish a progressive school system at Minidoka was unsuccessful. One of the main obstacles, aside from the lamentable lack of supplies and trained teachers, was that the morale of the students was not very high. The regimented life to which they were subjected caused them to be bitter and disillusioned. It was difficult to create a situation whereby students would embrace the opportunity to receive an education as long as they possessed negative attitudes. The teachers were unable to stimulate interest under such conditions. Students were usually quite skeptical of the educational program, partly because it emphasized American democracy, a topic which seemed to magnify the injustices that had befallen them. Adults were also critical of the school system, and their support was not forthcoming.[1]

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[1] Glenn, Eunice, "Education Behind Barbed Wire," Minidoka Irrigator, January 20, 1945, p. 2.

[2] "Historical Narrative Report of the Community Management Division: Education Section, Minidoka Project Schools." op. cit., p. 3.

As for higher education, Japanese students desiring a university education could apply for a special release, enabling them to attend a university outside the center. Only Nisei citizens were granted this privilege, and they had to be financially capable of supporting themselves for the school year. The Student Relocation division assisted students in selecting WRA approved universities, evaluated academic records, and secured the admission of students into institutions of higher learning.

An adult educational program was launched in November of 1942. It was designed to Americanize the Japanese, to give them training in the English language, to familiarize them with the history of the United States, and to prepare them for relocation.[2] Classes were held in recreation halls or empty barracks, and the majority of the instructors were Japanese. Adult education courses were open to evacuees of all ages.

An industrial arts program for adults was inaugurated under the direction of the state vocational education program. Courses were offered in farm machinery, repair and maintenance, welding, motor tune up, poultry and dairy husbandry, truck farming, auto electric systems, auto mechanics, electricity, and farm carpentry. This program was designed to expedite relocation by teaching students technical and manual skills that would aid them in obtaining employment outside the center.[1]

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[1] Niver, Richard A., "Personal Narrative Report of Adult-Vocational Education Supervisor," Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho. p. 4.

[2] "Historical Narrative Report of the Community Management Division: Education Section, Minidoka Project Schools." op. cit., p. 45.

Four libraries opened in the community during the fall of 1942. The school system operated three (the two elementary schools and the high school each had a library), and a public library was established. The project circulating library received books from various sources. Libraries in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho donated books, and residents willingly contributed to the collection. Over a period of months the project library acquired 22,000 volumes, and many editions were available in Japanese.[2] The library subscribed to several newspapers and 100 different magazines for the reading pleasure of the residents.

Cooperative Enterprise

In September of 1942, the administration circulated a petition to determine the attitude of the colonists regarding the establishment of a resident-controlled cooperative enterprise. The purpose of the cooperative would be to furnish residents with goods and services that were not provided by the government. The reaction to this proposal was favorable, and a representative body was allowed to draft a charter of principles under which the organization would operate. A Congress of Delegates, composed of two representatives from each block, was elected by the residents. The delegates selected seven from their own number to form an organization committee which proceeded to draft articles of incorporation. The Congress of Delegates ratified the charter and it was subsequently approved by the WRA. The Minidoka Consumers Co-operative became a recognized corporation on December 22, 1942.[1]

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[1] "Historical Narrative Report of the Community Management Division: Education Section, Minidoka Project Schools." op. cit., p. 45.

[2] Ibid., p. 50.

Membership in the organization was open to all adults and could be purchased for five dollars. A Board of Directors, elected by the members of the cooperative, directed the affairs of the enterprise. Goods were to be sold at the current market price, and purchasers were periodically to receive dividends relative to the overall profit. The Minidoka Consumers Cooperative controlled all the businesses in the community, since it was illegal to operate privately-owned establishments. This evacuee-controlled organization soon set up the following service agencies: one shoe repair shop, one watch repair shop, two mail order agencies, four general stores, one clothing and dry goods store, one beauty parlor, two barber shops, one flower shop, one newspaper distributing agency, a motion picture department, and a dry cleaning shop.[2] Many of these services were discontinued in July of 1943, when the WRA decided to reduce the number of employed evacuees on center projects.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, September 16, 1944.

[2] Ibid., September 25, 1943.

Project Newspaper

The administration began to publish a mimeographed newspaper called the Minidoka Irrigator in August of 1942. Although it contained some local news, it served primarily as a bulletin to inform the inhabitants of recent decisions and proposals made by the WRA and the Project Director. News on a national level was not covered unless it dealt directly with Japanese relocation. The Irrigator was staffed by evacuees, but in actuality it was controlled and censored by the administration. The paper announced forthcoming social and athletic events, and editorials discussed living conditions at the center and commented on some of the problems connected with future relocation.

In late February of 1943, the Consumers Cooperative assumed the publication of the Irrigator. From this time forward it was printed in Jerome, Idaho. The paper was delivered once a week to every apartment in the community without charge.

Community Activities

An evacuee controlled organization, Community Activities, was instituted for the purpose of promoting and directing recreational, social, and cultural activities. The Community Activities division was composed of the following six sections: music, socials, entertainments, children's activities, arts and crafts, and athletics.[1] Each section was managed by an evacuee supervisor who was responsible for planning and directing activities in his particular field. Unfortunately, it was difficult to provide the community with suitable entertainment. There were many reasons why this program could not be fully realized. First, athletic equipment was practically unobtainable. Second, only half of the recreation halls were available for public functions, as the other half were used as living quarters. Third, it was impossible to hold outdoor athletic events unless playing areas were cleared and leveled. Last, the Community Activities division operated on an extremely limited budget.[1] These obstacles had to be eliminated before a comprehensive recreational program could operate successfully.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, September 18, 1942.

At first the recreation program did not receive adequate attention because residents were occupied with more immediate problems. When the chaos of settlement abated, the need for organized activities becamse more apparent, and enthusiasm gradually increased. The recreation staff sponsored inexpensive events and entertainments; dances, talent shows, record concerts, marshmallow roasts, bonfires, and athletic games became common. A great variety of experimental entertainments was planned, as it was necessary to determine which of these programs would best stimulate active interest.[2]

Due to the exodus of workers, lack of facilities, and absence of suitable playing fields, the first attempt to promote a successful athletic program failed. Competition between men's softball leagues was temporarily discontinued due to a shortage of players. Basketball games could not be institued until courts were installed. Informal volleyball, football, and baseball games held in street intersections, while popular with the participants, raised clouds of dust and annoyed local residents. However, the athletics division managed to organize six girls' softball teams and three softball teams for older men. Juvenile football teams were also formed. The administration promised that a gymnasium would eventually be constructed, but the completion of this project was delayed until the spring of 1945. Winter brought an end to outdoor ball games, and ice skating became popular after an improvised rink was constructed in a vacant lot.

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[1] Weston, Bert, "Statistical-Functional Report of Assistant Project Director of Community Management, Minidoka." p. 4.

[2] "Minidoka Report No. 8," October 1942. p. 1.

The Community Activities division sponsored diverse entertainments and activities, which served to enliven an otherwise dull existence. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts participated in outdoor amusements such as bonfires, hikes, and campfire meetings. A movie theater opened its doors in October, 1942, and evening record concerts, with records donated from private collections, provided entertainment for music lovers. Classes in arts and crafts proved to be highly popular with residents. Novel artistic creations, including sagebrush furniture, paintings, Japanese dolls, and miniature gardens, were enthusiastically exhibited.

Christmas was always a special occasion at Minidoka, celebrated with appropriate fanfare and festivity. The WRA thoughtfully provided the center with Christmas trees, which were placed in dining halls, school rooms, and hospital wards. Church organizations donated presents for the Minidoka children. Each block contributed to a Christmas fund that was used to purchase candies and decorations.

Religion

Several religious organizations were represented at Minidoka, including the Catholic Church, six Protestant denominations, and three

Buddhist sects. Services were held in barracks especially equipped with pianos, seating accommodations, and occasionally an organ. The pianos and organs were donated by Protestant and Buddhist churches in Seattle and Portland.[1]

The six Protestant denominations combined their respective memberships to form the Federated Christian Church. Eight evacuee ministers and a number of Caucasion missionaries from neighboring towns presided over Sunday school, prayer meetings, and other religious gatherings. Minidoka Catholics were formerly members of a parish in Seattle.[2] After the ordeal of evacuation, they attempted to preserve the social and religious connections and activities that the congregation had previously enjoyed.

Ministers of three Buddhist sects formed the United Buddhist Church by consolidating their respective congregations. This union gradually deteriorated, however, and denominational services were eventually conducted separately.[3] The 2,000 Minidoka Buddhists received a weekly newspaper, Buddhism in Minidoka, which was published in both English and Japanese. Aside from the regular Sunday services, the Buddhist sects sponsored adolescent and adult devotional meetings.

The plan to establish local institutions and services met with only partial success. In many respects this scheme was intended to give the community a facade of respectability, but economic, social and political institutions, nominally controlled by the residents, failed to hide the fact that Minidoka resembled a concentration camp more than it did a progressive community. The evacuees were aware of this and consequently they did not respond with as much enthusiasm as would have been the case under more encouraging circumstances.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, November 18, 1942. p. 3.

[2] Ibid., September 25, 1943. p. 5.

[3] "WRA Community Activities Section." Compiled by J. Wesley Johnson.

CHAPTER IV

PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

The purpose of the center was to provide evacuees with basic necessities at a minimum amount of cost and to relocate colonists as soon as conditions would permit.[1] A Project Director, assisted by a staff of Caucasian personnel that had been recruited from Idaho and adjacent states, managed the affairs of the community. The administration did not have much latitude in initiating policy, since center procedure was determined at the WRA office in Washington and transmitted to the local project administration.[2] Center management was unable to alter the amount of available goods or appreciably improve living conditions at Minidoka because of the strict rationing policy regulated by the WRA. However, the Project Director could to a limited extent fix the degree of evacuee participation in center affairs, and he was also in a position to influence relations between management and colonists. The attitude of the administration and the way in which it managed the center intimately affected the Japanese, who were quick to respond unfavorably if harsh tactics or unwarranted measures were employed.

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[1] Information for this chapter was derived from the following sources: Sakoda, James, Minidoka: An Analysis of Changing Patterns of Social Interaction, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, 1955; Stafford, Harry L., "Project Director's Narrative," Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho; "Statistical-Functional Report of Personnel Management Section," Final Report of Personnel Section. Compiled by L. W. Folsom.

[2] Sakoda, James, "An Analysis of Changing Patterns of Social Interaction," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Sociology, University of California. p. 101.

Personnel Problems

The problem of finding competent trained personnel for Minidoka proved to be almost insurmountable. Minidoka suffered from a high employee turnover rate, making it exceedingly difficult to secure staff members who were educationally and psychologically prepared for the unique conditions of relocation. Not only were employees disheartened by some of the unpleasant aspects of center life, but there were other less obvious factors which were responsible for the loss of administrators. Some staff members left Minidoka because of an inability to cooperate with their superiors.[1] The hierarchical system was conducive to friction because of the supreme power of the Project Director over policy. Living quarters provided for the personnel proved to be inadequate and a source of discontent, forcing many employees to live in nearby towns. Other staff members had to be released when it became apparent that they were incapable of handling the particular position to which they were assigned.[2]

Personnel Attitudes

Cooperation between staff members, a situation that was prerequisite to the smooth functioning of the center, was difficult to achieve, mainly because they possessed diverse ideas as to how the administration should deal with the evacuees and conduct the affairs of the center. It is possible to classify administrators according to their relative tolerance toward Japanese. One group could be considered definitely anti-Japanese. The prevailing philosophy of this faction was that colonists should receive severe treatment because of their "obvious" ties with Japan. Appointed personnel holding this view usually had a stereotyped impression of the Japanese as crafty, treacherous people, who could be controlled only through the exercise of stern discipline.[1] Another group proved to be very sympathetic toward the colonists, beliving that they should be given a fair chance to prove their loyalty. A third group had less definite opinions regarding the colonists. Personnel of this category did not always trust the Issei, but the Nisei were considered to be respectable and trustworthy citizens.[2]

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[1] "Statistical-Functional Report of Personnel Management Section," Final Report of Personnel Section, Compiled by L. W. Fulsom.

[2] Ibid.

Naturally, as long as this situation existed it was extremely difficult for staff members to reach agreement as to what center policy should be in regard to the Japanese. The result was that similar problems sometimes evoked diverse reactions from the staff members. Antagonism between sensitive colonists and intolerant personnel developed as a result of this condition. Also, friction among administrative employees often could be traced to an inability to reach agreement over the status of evacuees.

Matters were made worse by the fact that the intolerant group was constantly growing. Due to a shortage of trained personnel, positions were filled by people who were totally unfamiliar with problems connected with relocation, having formed their opinion of Japanese-Americans through rumors, gossip, and biased articles appearing in Hearst Newspapers.

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[1] "Statistical-Functional Report of Community Analysis Section," Historical Sketch of Analysis Section, compiled by Elmer Smith.

[2] Ibid.

Such administrators could not always be expected to act with discretion in their relationships with evacuees.[1] Another reason why so many administrators were anti-Japanese was that they had little or no contact with the colonists. Fraternization with evacuees was discouraged. The standard policy of the administration was that friendly or personal associations with the Japanese should be avoided; all contact was to be on a purely business level.[2] Under these circumstances it was easy for the administration to ignore the pulse of the community.

Staff members who felt compassion for the Japanese were not in a position to influence center policy toward their views. The tolerant group was composed of church officials, some school teachers, missionaries, and a few social workers.[3] Although this element could be easily ignored by the administration, it, nevertheless, served in some instances as a liberal check on center management.

Attitude of the Administration

The basic policy of the administration was to retain control of center government and to discourage evacuee participation in center affairs.[4] Center management was reluctant to relinquish authority to a popularly elected community council, preferring to operate through Japanese leaders who were directly responsible to the administration. Evacuee managers, appointed by the Project Director, acted as block representatives and performed various duties incident to barracks living. Because they were not popularly elected, some block managers were distrusted and even despised by evacuees, and at times accused of siding with the administration against the interests of the community.[1]

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[1] "Statistical-Functional Report of Community Analysis," op.cit., p. 12

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 6.

[4] Sakoda, op. cit., p. 105.

Although center management presumably followed instructions transmitted by the WRA, it was necessary to adjust policy according to local conditions. Discretion was necessary in this procedure, since evacuees would cooperate only to the extent that they were satisfied with the operation of the center. The absolute nature of the system, which made colonists entirely dependent upon management for food, employment, housing, education, etc., lent itself to evacuee attack. An explosive situation would rapidly develop if the administration tried to enforce unpopular decisions. During the early months of Minidoka's history, residents seemed to possess a discernible amount of respect for center management, and, aside from the fence incident, there were no riots or demonstrations which would indicate severe hostility. This situation changed when the administration applied pressure tactics to expedite the relocation process in preparation for final liquidation, a topic which will be discussed in a later chapter.

The WRA cannot be blamed for its failure to provide the center with men who were prepared for the unique conditions of center life. Qualified personnel could not be easily found to fill vacant positions since men of high caliber were needed in more vital areas. But it is unfortunate that Stafford did not curb the actions of the more militant anti-Japanese administrators, thus avoiding some of the disturbances that took place.

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[1] Sakoda, op. cit., p. 105

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Soon after the center's inception, the project administration launched a drive to find jobs for willing evacuee workers.[1] An employment office was set up to recruit a labor force for work both inside and outside the relocation center. Center management hired hundreds of colonists to perform necessary services in the community. Evacuees were also encouraged to help harvest crops on private farms in the locality. The Japanese gratefully accepted this opportunity to escape the routine of camp life and worked as truck drivers, dining hall helpers, mechanics, maintenance men, and laborers. An unskilled or semi-skilled worker received $16.00 a month, while some professionally trained Japanese were paid $19.00 a month.[2] A fire department and police department were operated by evacuees, and the hospital hired Japanese nurses and aids to wait on the patients. Wages were poor and many of the tasks were disagreeable, but gainful employment offered diversion from an otherwise humdrum existence.

A labor board was organized to handle the grievances of the workers. The need for such a board became manifest when the Placement

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[1] Information for this chapter was derived from the following sources: Minidoka Irrigator; "Final Report of the Agriculture Section," Minidoka Relocation Center, compiled by Louis E. Rice and Rhuel D. Beebout; "WRA Community Analysis Section: A Preliminary Survey of the Boilermen's Dispute at Minidoka," Minidoka Relocation Center, March 3, 1944.

[2] Minidoka Irrigator, September 4, 1943

Office was flooded with complaints from employees who were dissatisfied with working rules and working conditions. The Fair Labor Practice Board was staffed with popularly-elected Japanese.

Off-Center Employment

The WRA made arrangements whereby evacuees could leave the center and work as farm laborers in Idaho and nearby states. Leave permits were granted under the following qualifications:

1) The applicant's loyalty to the United States had to be established.

2) He had to be a citizen of the United States.

3) He could work only in states outside the Western Defense Command.

4) Evacuees could not work in communities where anti-Japanese sentiment prevailed.[1]

The presence of Japanese in many towns and cities in Idaho was looked upon with horror by some citizens, while certain conservative organizations (motivated by economic considerations as well as possessing a basic suspicion of the Japanese) deeply resented the intrusion of "aliens" into civilian American society. Many were convinced that evacuees should remain in relocation centers for the remainder of the war, where they could be kept under strict observation. The off-center employment policy was unpopular with some groups because it enabled Japanese to compete in the labor market. Resolutions, passed by various anti-Japanese organizations in Idaho, expressed concern over the infiltration of evacuee workers, demanding that they be restricted in their activities or confined to the center for the duration of the war.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, October 28, 1942.

The Idaho Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars denounced the off-center employment policy in a resolution that is typical of statements made by detractors of the program:

> We hereby voice our disapproval of the entire policy being followed by our federal, state, and local government toward the Japanese which our military authorities felt were a menace to our national security when they evacuated them from the Pacific Coast and are still so distrustful of these Japanese that they do not desire them in the military forces yet the federal, state, and local governments accord them the privileges of entering into competition with American labor and business while American youths are taken from their places of business and labor to fight the horde of emperor worshipping maniacs from the Island of Japan.[1]

The Pocatello Central Labor Union expressed disapproval of the employment of Japanese by local business establishments in a resolution which advocated a boycott of stores following this practice:

> Whereas, these Japanese are a detriment to the American standard of living . . . are not inducted into the armed forces . . . are being employed in business houses in Pocatello and in the state of Idaho, in jobs vacated by our workers . . . we request all members organized labor to refrain from patronizing any and all business establishments employing Japs.[2]

There were other manifestations of anti-Japanese sentiment in Idaho. The Twin Falls Kiwanis Club held that Japanese residing in the city should be forbidden to speak their "alien language," claiming that "the spoken foreign words of our enemies grate upon our senses," and that this practice provoked "suspicion and distrust."[1] The Twin Falls chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars suggested that Japanese-Americans be treated as prisoners of war and held in concentration camps until they could be shipped to Japan.[2] The Idaho Grange recommended that legislation be passed which would prevent Japanese from buying land.[3] An American Legion official in Boise complained that Japanese were wandering about the city "without apparent supervision."[4]

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, June 24, 1944.

[2] Minidoka Irrigator, October 2, 1943.

Such extreme views were not representative of the opinion of the majority of Idaho's inhabitants, but they serve to show that anti-Japanese attitudes were held by a vociferous minority.

Local farmers were at first reluctant to hire Japanese labor. Many sincerely believed that the "enemy aliens" would not prove to be trustworthy or reliable employees. Skepticism, however, soon disappeared when reports circulated that Japanese harvesters were willing and industrious workers.

Because of the extensive labor shortage in the Rocky Mountain region, local farmers hired Hunt evacuees to work in the potato fields, and large sugar beet corporations sent agents to Minidoka in an effort to recruit Japanese workers. By October of 1943, 2400 Japanese from Minidoka were toiling in the fields of Idaho, northern Utah, eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, and Montana.[5]

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, June 5, 1943.

[2] Ibid., October 23, 1943.

[3] Ibid., January 1, 1944.

[4] Twin Falls Times, June 28, 1943.

[5] Minidoka Irrigator, October 28, 1942.

Although wages and working conditions were guaranteed by contracts, many Japanese found off-project farm employment to be most unpleasant. Not only was the work tedious, but living accommodations provided by employers frequently proved to be inadequate. The following quotation describes the reaction of a Japanese woman from Minidoka who was employed in the Idaho potato fields:

> The human body can stand only so much, and only so much, and no more. The spud-pickers . . . . are tottering on the brink of life and death after each day's work. In the first two days, we out in Stirling, Idaho, have learned deep appreciation of the so-called lowly potatoes . . . . Propagandists have injected into our willing ears the juicy morsel that spud picking, while being a mite hard, was easy . . . . Thirty sacks later, with backs splitting, and breath coming in convulsive, tortured gasps, we looked up with glazed eyes . . . . We never fail to marvel at how much the human body can stand, because somehow we existed . . .[1]

Because the Japanese were not used to such strenuous labor, it was inevitable that some would complain. However, most eventually became inured to the working conditions, and one farmer was able to report that "they were the finest, most cooperative help that we have had in a number of years. The crew was always on time in the morning, worked as long as possible, regardless of weather conditions . . ."[2]

The program of off-center employment was successful for two reasons: Japanese workers helped to save vital crops, and the local populace became more tolerant, having had personal contact with evacuees.

The employment situation at Minidoka was adversely affected by the exodus of farm workers, causing a severe shortage of manpower.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, October 30, 1943.

[2] Ibid., January 30, 1943.

In order to compensate for this constant drain on labor, the administration decided to train women for occupations previously open only to men. Evacuee women were hired as service station operators and firemen. The placement office proudly announced that "in a short while, we will have women carpenters, truck drivers, mechanics, swampers, and farm equipment operators."[1] Women apprentices received only $12.00 a month.

New Employment Policy

Until July of 1943 center management had tried to employ as many residents as possible, and as a result Minidoka had the smallest Caucasian staff of any relocation center. The administration had adopted a rule that no Caucasion should hold a position that could be filled by an evacuee. Featherbedding existed on many projects, and while this policy was pursued, on-center employment exceeded 4,500.

In July of 1943, the WRA Director, Dillon S. Myer, ordered all relocation centers to reduce drastically the number of colonists on the center payrolls. This change in policy was designed to encourage relocation as well as decrease the operational cost of the centers.[2] Although the WRA allowed local project administrations a period of three months to eliminate jobs, the employment office at Minidoka immediately reduced the labor force to the prescribed level. In just two weeks the labor force suffered a decrease of approximately 1,200 men. Departments considered expendable were whittled down to a skeleton crew. The Community Activities' staff was practically eliminated, and the Consumers Cooperative was forced to discontinue many services. The fish market, drygoods store, flowershop, and movie theater were closed down as a result of this new policy.[1]

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, October 10, 1942.

[2] Ibid., July 10, 1943.

Naturally, the workers affected by this drastic decision were outraged. They could not understand why the administration was so anxious to deplete the labor force when the WRA had allowed three months for the policy to go into effect. The following diagram indicates the extent of the employment cut:

Table 3. Effect of Employment Reduction Policy on Various Departments.[a]

Department	Employees June 1	Employees July 15
Hospital	327	260
Internal Security	103	50
Steward	1,580	1,120
Transportation	241	170
Fiscal	6	6
Administrative	46	46
Business Enterprise	212	130
Property Control	74	52
Agriculture	152	200
Fire Department	30	58
Employment	72	50
Procurement	10	8
Statistics	24	14
Project Attorney	8	6
Evacuee Property	8	6
Public Works	823	505
Community Services	382	177
Total	4,117	2,874

[a] Minidoka Irrigator, July 10, 1943.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, July 10, 1943.

The decision to limit employment helped to undermine the friendly relationship that had previously existed between the administration and the residents, causing serious difficulties in the future. It was believed by most people that the administration had immediately curtailed employment in order to creat hardships, so that colonists would want to relocate as soon as possible.[1] Resentment towards this policy culminated in a display of resistance on the part of maintenance men who, backed by the populace, were able to successfully oppose the administration.

Boilermen's Strike

As a result of the decision to eliminate all jobs not essential to the operation of the center, the number of maintenance workers for each block was reduced from eleven to four. In November of 1943, the administration tried to force this department to increase its working schedule to 24 hours. The maintenance workers were already burdened with duties, and they refused to accept the proposed change. In December, the Assistant Project Director ordered the maintenance department to adhere to the new schedule, although it was fairly obvious that this decision would meet resistance. The maintenance workers, not intimidated by this ultimatum, immediately handed in their resignations.[2]

As long as the strike was in effect, the boilers were unattended and the colony was without hot water; consequently, the whole community became concerned about the dispute. Several meetings were held to discuss the situation. The maintenance workers explained and defended their position, holding that they should not be expected to perform extra work unless they had extra help. The residents were unhappy about not having hot water, but they supported the maintenance men on this issue.

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[1] "WRA Community Analysis Section, A Preliminary Survey of the Boilermen's Dispute at Minidoka," Project Analysis Series No. 13, March 3, 1944.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2

It became apparent that the dispute was not limited to this one department, but, in actuality, everyone in the center was affected by the action of the administration. The central question was whether or not center management could arbitrarily force its will upon the populace, regardless of the feelings of the latter. On January 6, 1944, a delegation of women, representing all the blocks, marched on the Acting Project Director's office and demanded that the matter be settled and that the rights of the maintenance men be respected. The Community Council examined the problem and exerted further pressure upon the administration to withdraw the proposed 24-hour working schedule.

The administration found it very difficult to fight public sentiment. On January 10, the Project Director retreated from his previous position and informed the maintenance men that he would retract the 24-hour schedule if they would return to work.[1] They accepted this proposal and resumed work, but this solution failed to sooth the ill-feelings that had been aroused. The boilermen's strike was the first major conflict between the administration and the residents. The damage wrought could not be easily repaired.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 6.

[2] Ibid., p. 12.

The relatively peaceful termination of the dispute was considered a definite victory for the Community Council because of the role it played in the settlement. With its prestige thus bolstered, the Council became a discernible force in the community, but it was still locked in the role of an advisory body.

Agriculture

An agricultural problem was inaugurated at Minidoka during the Spring of 1943 that was designed to transform the colony into a self-sustaining unit. Before this goal could be realized the agricultural department had to overcome serious obstacles. Since southern Idaho has a cold climate the growing season is relatively short. Scanty precipitation made extensive irrigation necessary, but the hilly terrain often made it difficult to water the crops sufficiently. Numerous lava outcroppings broke up fields into relatively small units, thus limiting the acreage of land that could be brought under cultivation. A lack of proper farming equipment forced the colonists to do most of the clearing and planting by hand. Lastly, most Japanese field hands knew little about irrigation and agriculture so that the most efficient methods were not always employed. These factors warred against the possibility that the Minidoka farm would ever become a successful enterprise.[1]

Evacuees experienced great difficulty in clearing the land, since suitable farming equipment was unobtainable. At first field hands tried to cut sagebrush with hand tools, but this method proved to be slow and laborious. Eighty acres were cleared by hand. Sagebrush was collected into piles and burned. Later on in the fall of 1943, a more efficient method was employed to subjugate the land. A railroad rail was dragged along the ground, which uprooted the sagebrush most effectively.[1]

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[1] "Final Report of the Agriculture Section," Minidoka Relocation Center. Compiled by Louis E. Rice and Rhuel D. Beebout.

Approximately 250 acres were cleared, irrigated, and placed under cultivation during the spring of 1943. A wide variety of crops were planted, including corn, lettuce, peas, celery, onions, carrots, potatoes, broccoli, cabbage, cantaloupe, honeydew melons, pumpkins, turnips, zucchini, squash, string beans, and many other vegetables. The diversity of vegetables and amounts grown were determined by the agricultural products that were needed by the center, the type of crops that could be successfully grown in the area, and the manpower and agricultural equipment that was available. It was also necessary for crops to be suitable for storage or shipping, and, when possible, the colonist's tastes were taken into consideration.[2]

Evacuees harvested more than 2,221,000 pounds of crops in 1943.[3] Insects and improper irrigational methods ruined some of the vegetables, but enough potatoes were grown to last the colony for a year. Surplus crops were disposed of in different ways. A canning and pickling plant preserved vegetables that could not be immediately consumed, and potatoes were stored in a large root cellar.

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[1] "Final Report of the Agriculture Section," Minidoka Relocation Center. Compiled by Louis E. Rice and Rhuel D. Beebout. p. 5.

[2] Ibid., p. 45

[3] Minidoka Irrigator, September 16, 1944.

The 1944 harvest, 3,817,311 pounds, was disappointing, although more than 800 acres had been brought under cultivation.[1] The reasons for this poor yield were manifold. It was due partially to a great turnover in labor resulting from the seasonal leave program. The Agricultural Department found it necessary to recruit high school students, children, and elderly adults (including women) to plant, irrigate, and harvest the crops. The vast majority of this motley crew was inexperienced, and their efforts, though commendable, did not always produce favorable results. Not only were they incapable of operating the farm equipment, but they did not always follow sage advice on how to increase crop productivity.[2] Another factor was that much of the land remained unirrigated because of the unevenness of the terrain. In spite of these difficulties, by the end of 1944, large quantities of cabbage, carrots, potatoes, and onions had been stored in root cellars. These surplus crops were exchanged for foods (especially beef and milk) produced at other relocation centers.

In addition to the agricultural program other attempts were made to help place the economy on a self-sufficient basis. A hog ranch and a poultry unit were established as part of the Minidoka farm. The poultry farm had 8,600 chickens by the end of 1943, and 3,500 laying hens produced three cases of eggs per day. The hog ranch contained more than 400 hogs by December of 1943, furnishing the dining halls with 25 head per week. In 1944, the poultry farm produced 38,682 pounds of poultry and 62,730 eggs, and the hog farm produced 306,921 pounds of pork.[1]

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, January 20, 1945.

[2] "Final Report of the Agricultural Section," op. cit., p. 67.

The Agriculture Department was in operation from the fall of 1942 until the fall of 1944. During this period, 6,026,450 pounds of vegetables and grains for livestock were produced, valued at $170,002.[2] The agricultural program may not have been a model of efficiency, but it gave residents needed employment and enabled Minidoka to contribute her small share in the war effort. From June, 1943, until May, 1945, when the last of the stored foodstuffs disappeared, the farm furnished Minidoka with approximately one-sixth of the center's food requirement.[3] Considering the many obstacles with which the Agricultural Department had to contend, it is amazing that the program produced as much as it did.

Food Preservation

Since large quantities of fresh vegetables produced on the Minidoka farm could not be readily consumed in center mess halls, it became apparent that the construction of a food preservation plant would prevent spoilage and provide the center with canned and pickled vegetables during the winter months. The food preservation program, launched in September of 1943, was determined by the tastes of the colonists as well as the equipment that was available for such an operation. A canning and pickling plant was improvised from materials found on the center. Vats, tables, and hot and cold water lines installed in an empty barrack constituted the canning plant, while surplus barrels served as pickling containers. However, the make-shift canning machinery proved to be unsatisfactory, as attempts to can vegetables resulted in failure. Plans were made to acquire proper cannery equipment, but none was available, the canning operation was discontinued.[1]

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, January 20, 1945.

[2] "Final Report of the Agricultural Section," op.cit., p. 138.

[3] Ibid.

While the pickling plant was in operation, surplus vegetables were stored in cellars and pickled during winter months. This program was more successful than the canning venture, and the residents enjoyed pickled foods for most of the year. In 1944, center management temporarily closed the pickling plant, having discovered that some imaginative evacuees were using equipment for the manufacture of sake, an intoxicating beverage made from fermented rice. The pickling plant was permanently closed December 31, 1944, when the supply of vegetables became exhausted.

The economic activities of the center were inefficiently operated in many cases, failing to fulfill the intended purpose of making Minidoka a self-sufficient enterprise. However, employment served to keep willing workers busy and helped give Minidoka the semblance of a normal community. Many Japanese took pride in their work and accepted the challenge of building an economic base with enthusiasm. This was especially true of the agriculture department. Minidokans were proud of the fact that the farm program was successful to the extent that the center had fresh vegetables during the summer months.

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[1] "Final Report of Agricultural Division," op. cit., p. 121-123.

CHAPTER VI

INDUCTION AND SEGREGATION

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the War Department adopted a policy whereby Japanese-Americans were refused admission into the Armed Forces. However, in January of 1943, the War Department, reversing its previous position, announced that a special Japanese combat unit, composed of loyal Nisei, would be formed as soon as volunteers could be encouraged to enlist. If the Japanese accepted this plan with enthusiasm, the Army would consider drafting all eligible Nisei in the future.[1]

Reaction to Enlistment Program

Minidokans reacted to this announcement with mixed feelings. Main support for the program came from the young Nisei, since enlistment offered them a chance to leave the center as well as an opportunity to help in the war effort. The Issei element (as well as many Nisei) was skeptical of this plan for various reasons.[2] First, the segregation idea behind the scheme was unacceptable to many. Second, it did not appear reasonable for the government to expect Japanese-Americans to defend the country when they had consistently been deprived of their rights as citizens. Third, alien parents were afraid of the future if their sons were killed in battle.[1] Fourth, some were afraid that the Japanese battalion would be purposely sacrificed at the front lines.

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[1] Minidoka Report No. 57, "WRA Registration and Army Volunteering," Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho. p. 3.

[2] Ibid.

Drive for Support

The administration was aware that these fears would have to be dispelled before the enlistment program could be successful. In an attempt to rally the support of the leaders of the community, the Project Director invited several Issei spokesmen to a conference, so that some of the troublesome problems facing the volunteering program could be discussed. The aforementioned criticisms were raised, but, after a great deal of debate, the leaders decided to support the plan. It was hoped that Nisei soldiers would prove by their courage and loyalty that the great majority of Japanese-Americans were patriotic citizens. Also, the creation of an all-Japanese combat team could hasten the dissolution of the centers, since the public would become more tolerant when it was learned that Japanese-Americans were dying for their country.[2]

An advisory group of Japanese leaders was formed to counsel the administration on how the latter should approach the community on the subject of voluntary induction. It was decided that a series of meetings held in different sections of the community would enable the administration to explain the details of the program and allow the evacuees to discuss the proposal. At these meetings the administration made it clear that regardless of the past it was necessary for the Nisei to seize this opportunity and prove to Americans that Japanese citizens were willing to sacrifice their lives for their country. The meetings were well attended and proved to be quite successful. The attitude of the community gradually shifted to favor the voluntary induction program.[1]

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[1] Aliens had a considerable amount of property held in their sons' names, and they were afraid that they would be unable to inherit it, due to the fact that laws in Oregon and Washington prevented Issei from inheriting land.

[2] Minidoka Report No. 57, op. cit., p. 7.

A group from the War Department arrived at Minidoka in early February to accept applications from eligible Nisei evacuees. The Army team met with some opposition while the enlistment campaign was being promoted. It was obvious that many evacuees were still resentful toward the government because of relocation.[2] Some were not convinced that the War Department had actually changed its basic attitude regarding Japanese soldiers. Many Japanese servicemen having volunteered for the Army before Pearl Harbor, had subsequently been discharged without due cause. Also, the military polic stationed at the center took precaution to man the guard towers while the enlistment program was being undertaken. Such preparations made it appear as though the government's reversal of policy in regard to Japanese servicemen was in actuality a gross example of hypocrisy.

Voluntary Enlistment

Beginning February 10, all male citizens over sixteen years of age were registered and interviewed by the Army team. The Administration held periodic meetings with potential volunteers, explaining the details of the program and urging them to join. Volunteering was light at the beginning of the program, but it gradually increased until by April more than 300 had applied for induction, which represented 19 percent of all eligible males between the ages of 17 and 38. A total of 289 Minidoka volunteers were given physical examinations, and 211 were eventually classified as acceptable for military service. On April 30, a flag dedication ceremony was held in honor of the departure of the first contingent of volunteers, numbering 31, that was scheduled to leave for Fort Douglas, Utah, on May 1. A large crowd witnessed this ceremony. The enlistees marched in a parade accompanied by the Boy Scout drum and bugle corps. Volunteers wore blue "V" insignias on their coat sleeves. Each dining hall in the center displayed flags upon which were stars designating the number of volunteers in the block.[1]

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[1] Minidoka Report No. 57., op. cit., p. 8.

[2] Ibid.

The drive ended with Minidoka leading the other relocation centers in the number of voluntary enlistments.[2] In October of 1943, an Honor Board was placed next to the main gate which listed the names of Minidokans serving in the U.S. Army.

Conscription

Due to the success of the volunteer army program, the War Department, in January of 1944, announced that in the future male Nisei would be drafted into the Army.[3] As a result of the inauguration of the draft, the number of Minidokans in the Army greatly increased. By the end of 1944, more than 800 residents were serving in the Armed Forces.[1] The draft program did not receive the unanimous support of the colonists. Opposition did not interfere with the program, but by October of 1944, 34 Hunt boys had been convicted for draft evasion.[2] This however, represented but a small percentage of the total number that were eventually drafted.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, May 1, 1943.

[2] Ibid., March 20, 1943.

[3] Ibid., January 29, 1944.

A large number of Hunt servicemen experienced combat, and many were killed in action. Memorial services were periodically held in honor of Minidoka soldiers who died in the defense of their country.

Segregation

Ever since the inception of the relocation program, a small minority of evacuees, classified as disloyal, had intermittently opposed the WRA and proved to be a potential source of agitation. This negative element exerted a malign influence in each community. As long as these malcontents were allowed to associate with loyal colonists, they would be, in the eyes of the WRA, in a position to undermine the peace of the community. As a result of this situation, Dillon Myer, Director of the WRA, announced that all disloyal Japanese living in relocation centers would be transferred to the Tule Lake Relocation Center in Northern California.[3] This group included those who had applied for repatriation.[1] Loyal Japanese who were presently living at Tule Lake were to be dispersed to other relocation centers. As a result of this new segregation policy, Minidoka sent 272 of her inhabitants to Tule Lake and received over 1,500 Tuleans in return. The first contingent from Tule Lake, numbering 523, arrived by train on September 25, 1943; two other groups (numbering approximately 500 each) arrived within the next few days.[2] The Minidoka segregants departed for Tule Lake on September 25.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, December 28, 1944.

[2] Ibid., October 7, 1944.

[3] Ibid., July 17, 1943.

Minidoka experienced great difficulty in accommodating this large influx of colonists. The newcomers consisted of 380 family units, but only 260 apartments were available. This shortage of living quarters meant that in many instances two families had to share one apartment. Recreation halls were partitioned to serve as temporary dwellings. These crowded conditions had to be tolerated until workers left the center on seasonal or indefinite leave.

Segregation and Registration

Segregation and registration disrupted the routine of the community. The induction of evacuees into the Army in a sense altered the status of evacuees, since it placed them in closer proximity to the war effort, indicating that the Army was adopting a more positive attitude in regard to Japanese-Americans. The segregation of Minidokans on the basis of loyalty weeded out the more antagonistic elements of the community but did not entirely eliminate opposition to center management or mark an end to disturbances.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, July 31, 1943.

[2] Ibid., September 18, 1943.

CHAPTER VII

LIQUIDATION AND RESETTLEMENT

One of the major functions of the centers was to relocate the evacuees on a permanent basis.[1] This operation was designed to return Japanese-Americans to civilian life, and at the same time reduce the number of evacuees living in relocation centers. The indefinite leave program had a slow start at Minidoka, because of the confusion that was prevalent during the early months and the red tape involved in securing a release. Before an indefinite leave permit was issued, it was necessary for the FBI, the WRA, and the Military Intelligence to clear a prospective applicant. Once a resident had obtained a release, he was free to relocate anywhere in the United States, outside of certain restricted military areas which included the West Coast. Evacuee families leaving the center were eligible for a subsistence allowance that helped defray expenses until they were properly situated. Leave grants were based on family size and need, but they were held to a bare minimum.

There were various ways that a resident could receive a leave clearance. Educational releases were granted to Nisei college students who wanted to continue their education. Residents who enlisted or were drafted into the Army were given an indefinite leave status.

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[1] Information for this chapter was derived from the following sources: Minidoka Irrigator; "WRA Registration and Army Volunteering," Minidoka Report No. 57, April 7, 1943.

Also permanent leave grants could be obtained by colonists desiring to work on the outside. The last category constituted the largest number of relocatees. By September of 1944, 4,150 residents had left the center for an indefinite period of time.[1]

As a result of the indefinite leave program, the exodus and arrival of seasonal workers, as well as the arrival of the Tuleans, the population of the center fluctuated violently from month to month as the following diagram indicates:

Table 4. Monthly Population from October of 1942 to December of 1944.[a]

1942		1943		1944	
October	8,311	January	9,091	January	8,964
November	7,597	February	9,274	February	8,784
December	8,438	March	9,375	March	8.549
		April	9,152	April	8,333
		May	8,351	May	7,799
		June	7,801	June	7,250
		July	7,666	July	7,058
		August	7,183	August	6,842
		September	7,164	September	6,930
		October	8,175	October	6,510
		November	6,923	November	6,697
		December	8,595	December	7,297

[a] War Relocation Authority, Seventh Semiannual Report, July 1 to December 31, Washington D. C., 1944. p. 50.

It will be noticed that, over a period of two years (October of 1942 to December of 1944) the relocation rate was not sufficient enough to drastically reduce the population. It became obvious that if the center was to close eventually, the indefinite leave program would have to be greatly expanded.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, September 16, 1944.

Announcement of Liquidation

In the middle of December, 1944, the WRA announced that all relocation centers would be closed within a period of six months to one year. The ban preventing Japanese from returning to the West Coast was to be raised on January 2, 1945. Furthermore, in order to encourage resettlement, evacuees would be allowed in the future to leave the centers without having to obtain special permits. As this news came unexpectedly, the complacency of the community was shattered. Minidoka residents were suddenly faced with the fact that the WRA was preparing to close the center.

The majority of the populace did not greet this news with enthusiasm. Most of the able-bodied men had by this time left the center, having joined the Army or found employment on the outside. The remaining Japanese consisted primarily of elderly people and children who were ill-equipped to support themselves in civilian life. They had become adjusted to center living--a stagnant condition that tended to weaken initiative--and, hence, many were reluctant to leave the security of the community. The outside world seemed to have little to offer them, as they had already been dispossessed of their homes and property. The effort that would be necessary to start life over again appeared to be incredibly difficult in view of the hardships and prejudices which confronted them. Then there was the agonizing fear that if they dared to return to their home towns on the West Coast, they would be ostracized from society.

A large percentage of the inhabitants were at first unconvinced that the WRA actually intended to close the centers in the immediate future. Those of this opinion thought that the WRA's announcement (that the centers would be closed) was an insidious threat designed to pressure the evacuees into leaving the center. This threat, however, was not to be taken seriously. Others believed that if Minidoka were closed, remaining evacuees would be transferred to some other relocation center.[1] Some contended that the centers would eventually be turned over to another government agency and continue to operate for an indefinite period of time.[2] The administration vigorously denied these rumors, but they were slow to die. It took several months to convince such rationalizers that the WRA was not bluffing. Gradually the populace accepted the fact that the liquidation of the center was inevitable.

Termination of Services

During the months following the announcement that the centers would be closed, the administration gradually suspended the operation of various services and facilities. The project labor force was substantially reduced. The agricultural division was eliminated. Vocational training shops, and the elementary and secondary schools were closed in May and June. Activities in the community were curtailed while all efforts were directed towards relocation. Budgets for different enterprises were reduced or eliminated. Several mess halls were closed as the population decreased due to the steady exodus of relocatees. The

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[1] U.S.W.R.A. Community Analysis Section, "Reactions in the Relocation Centers following Announcement of West Coast Opening and Ultimate Center Closing," June 21, 1945. p. 1.

[2] Ibid., No. 28, July 17, 1945. p. 1.

Minidoka Irrigator ceased to function at the end of July. Laundry, bath, and toilet facilities were closed when a block's population had declined to a set minimum.[1]

The rapid contraction of center activities had a profound effect upon the community, thoroughly disrupting the routine of center life.[2] Management was often more concerned with efficiency than the welfare of the people. As a result essential services were sometimes discontinued to the severe inconvenience of the residents. The gradual withdrawal of center services had an adverse effect upon the morale of the people, causing a great deal of protest and bitterness.[3] Liquidation was considered by many as a devious plot to render the community an undesirable place to live, so that evacuees would be more willing to make plans for resettlement. While such notions prevailed, residents were reluctant to cooperate with the administration, and as a result the relocation program suffered.

Opposition to Relocation

Although a few reacted favorably to the liquidation and relocation policy, the general opinion was that the WRA was obligated to keep the centers open until the outside situation was compatible with relocation. Resettlement had been a voluntary enterprise, but now it appeared as though the WRA was trying to coerce the evacuees into leaving. A representative group of sixteen Issei, who were established leaders in the community, presented the Project Director with a statement which expressed their disapproval of forced relocation and the WRA's plan to close the center:

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[1] U.S.W.R.A. Community Analysis Section, "Reactions in the Relocation Centers following Announcement of West Coast Opening and Ultimate Center Closing," June 21, 1945. p. 1.

[2] Letter from Jobu Yasumura, Report on a visit to the Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho, October 13-23, 1945, November 5, 1945. p. 5.

[3] Ibid.

> Early in the evacuation stage, the Government announced that for the protection of the evacuees themselves, it will retain them in relocation centers for the duration, and guarantee them food, clothing, shelter, and also recreational and educational facilities. Despite this promise, the Government abandoned this original policy and began to enforce a policy of persuading evacuees to leave the centers and resettle in American communities. The existence of intense anti-Japanese feelings and its threat upon the personal safety and livelihood of the evacuees are well known to the authorities in charge of the evacuees' welfare. Despite those and other unfavorable circumstances, the Government, acting through the WRA, has undertaken to impose upon the evacuees a policy of sprinkling them unnoticeably across the length and breadth of the country.[1]

Reports and rumors filtered into the center to the effect that anti-Japanese sentiment was still widespread along the West Coast, and actual accounts of Japanese terrorized by hatemongers reinforced the conviction that relocation would be a hazardous undertaking.[2] In June of 1945, an editorial appeared in the community paper which revealed the dismay of the populace over such occurrences:

> As in the present situation since the rescinding of the West Coast ban, some of us are frightened by the news stories that appear with surprising regularity in the coast papers concerning the hostility of the residents there. We are frightened and sometimes rather hurt and baffled by these stories, because once upon a time we used to know these same people.[3]

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[1] War Relocation Authority, Impounded People--Story of Life in the Relocation Centers, 1946. p. 146.

[2] U.S.W.R.A. Community Analysis Section, Weekly Summary No. 15, March 25, 1945. p. 3.

[3] Minidoka Irrigator, June 13, 1945.

Although the administration tried to reassure the residents that anti-Japanese agitation was not severe enough to impede resettlement, Minidokans were decidedly impressed by such reports. Stories of mistreated relocatees were well circulated in the center, and they were interpreted by many as evidence that the public was still unwilling to accept them.

Resistance towards relocation came mainly from the Issei. Relocation held little promise for them, since outside opportunities were reserved for the young and vigorous. This attitude was expressed by one Minidokan in a statement which reflects the feeling of apprehensiveness that was prevalent amongst the elderly Japanese:

> We are 40, 50, 60, 70 years old, can we go and take up the load of young men, and again go through what we did in 1900-1920? Can we stand to get low wages, be the first fired and last hired because of our race and color? We can't protect ourselves and law enforement people won't give a damn about us . . . .[1]

It was difficult for the administration to combat this argument effectively, and the Issei remained obstinate until the very end. Although the young Japanese in many instances were anxious to relocate, their parents were not easily convinced that resettlement was particularly desirable.[2]

The Relocation Movement

Early efforts to encourage large scale relocation failed, largely because the approach used by center management created a great deal of resentment. Opposition towards resettlement was difficult to overcome. Attempts on the part of the administration to encourage relocation were interpreted by many as subtle tactics to force unwilling evacuees into leaving the center.

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[1] U.S.W.R.A. Community Analysis Section, No. 28, July 17,1945. p. 1.

[2] Ibid., Weekly Summary No. 23, June 6, 1945. p. 1.

Several devices were used by the administration to convince the populace that immediate resettlement was to their better interest. Information concerning relocation was disseminated by various methods. Bulletins were posted in the mess halls and numerous articles appeared in the project newspaper, all of which stressed the necessity of making preparations for leaving the center and the numerous opportunities that were available on the outside. The WRA director, Dillon Myer, visited the center and lectured on the positive aspects of resettlement, attempting to dispel fears of the outside world and to minimize the extent of anti-Japanese sentiment.[1] Meetings were conducted to emphasize further the advisability of relocation. The Relocation Division interviewed evacuees who planned to leave the center, discussing problems and making arrangements for anyone who desired to leave. The relocation office listed numerous jobs in different parts of the country, offering evacuees some choice in the selection of an occupation and place of residency.

Most Minidokans resented this bombardment of propaganda. Multifarious techniques employed by center management to step up the rate of relocation failed to effect a significant change in attitude. Information bulletins listing employment opportunities were read with skepticism. Administration-sponsored meetings designed to educate the populace on the subject of resettlement were poorly attended. Japanese proved hesitant to discuss their relocation plans with administrative personnel due to a general feeling of distrust. Information that was considered reliable by evacuees in regard to relocation was usually derived from reports of Japanese visitors who were familiar with the outside situation. News articles and letters from relocated friends were also held to be valid sources.

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[1] Ibid., Weekly Summary No. 10, February, 1945. p. 1.

Although the majority of the residents preferred to remain in the center, Minidoka's population gradually declined during the months following the lifting of the West Coast ban. From January, 1945, to July, 1945, the population decreased by approximately 2,500. The following table indicates the extent of the population decline from January, 1945, to November, 1945:

Table 5. Population Decline, 1945.[a]

January	7,439
February	7,314
March	7,117
April	6,722
May	6,263
June	5,496
July	4,819
August	4,244
September	3,167
October	1,467
November	none

[a] Eighth Semi-Annual WRA Report. p. 67.

It will be noted from the preceding chart that the relocation rate greatly increased during the last three months of the center's existence. This was due mainly to a new policy initiated by the administration which radically changed the resettlement program.

Forced Relocation and Final Liquidation

In the middle of July the WRA announced that Minidoka was scheduled to close on November 1, 1945. In order to meet this deadline, the relocation program was pushed to the extreme, and center management launched a final program intended to complete the liquidation process.

Although the administration had been aggressive in its efforts to expedite resettlement, it became obvious that unless stern measures were employed, a recalcitrant minority would refuse to relocate. By September of 1945, three thousand residents were still in the center, and many had no intention of leaving.[1] In order to insure fulfillment of the closing deadline, the WRA supplied local project directors with a weapon (Administrative Notice 289) that enabled center management to evict anyone who was unwilling to leave. Minidoka residents were informed that this decree would be enforced whenever necessary. Naturally, the Japanese resented such threats, but it was apparent that resistance would be futile.

Center management was hesitant to serve eviction notices, being inclined to favor a policy whereby evacuees would be required to make definite plans for relocation. The intended goal was to have everyone select a departure date that would conform to an evacuation schedule, thus preventing a last-minute exodus that would invariably lead to chaos. Residents were divided into three categories, according to their proximity to relocation. The "A" group included those who had made definite plans and had agreed to a specific date of departure. The "B" group consisted of those who were planning to relocate but had not determined when they were going to leave. The last group, the "C" group, contained the rest of the residents--those who had made no plans at all. The "B" people were required to select a departure date, while the "C" group was told to make immediate plans.

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[1] Ninth Semiannual WRA Report. p. 46.

In September, a series of meetings were held specifically for the "B" and "C" groups. Attendance was compulsory. Colonists were informed that if relocation plans were not made voluntarily, the administration would send notices warning them that they had two weeks in which to select a departure date. If after two weeks they still refused to set a date, center management would present them with an ultimatum, wherein they would be given three days to leave the center. Those who ignored this order were to be forcefully evicted.

By applying extreme pressure, the administration was able to effect the evacuation of Minidoka on schedule. More than 3,000 evacuees left the center during the last month of its existence. Although a few die-hard residents had to be evicted, the vast majority cooperated (outwardly at least), and no overt acts of defiance detained closing procedure. The last groups to leave consisted of old men and women, small children, and a few hospital cases. Care was taken by the staff to assist those who needed help in preparing for final departure. The center was closed on October 23, 1945, eight days ahead of schedule.

The final liquidation program was executed in an orderly fashion, but the feelings of the bewildered evacuees, who viewed civilian life with trepidation, were coldly sacrificed during the process.

The vast majority of Minidoka's inhabitants did not return to their home towns in Oregon and Washington. It was apparent that anti-Japanese sentiment prevailed on the West Coast; therefore they sought homes elsewhere. Minidokans did not settle in any one particular area but dispersed all over the United States.

SUMMARY

By all external appearances it seemed as though the inhabitants of Minidoka had been able to adjust favorably to center life, and that they were reasonably satisfied with the way in which they had been treated. Their response to various programs showed that they were willing to contribute to the success of the community. Co-operation between colonists and center management seemed to indicate that relocation had not resulted in extensive bitterness. Hardships had been accepted with a minimum of complaints, while demonstrations or social disturbances were practically unknown. These observations, however, tend to be misleading. In actuality Minidokans were frustrated, insecure, and intensely worried about their future. The following comments upon center life, written by discontented residents, support this conclusion.

> We who are in relocation centers sometimes feel as if we have any rights left or not [sic]. According to the trend of events, we feel that we have been kicked around a little bit too much . . . grievances concerning the evacuation, restrictions placed upon us concerning the places we may go, questions concerning our loyalty to the U.S., when in our minds we are absolutely sure of our loyalties . . . rise to the surface and we become confused as to the real issues at stake.[1]

> Here, despite the calmness and the apparent complacent appearance on the surface, a thousand and one thoughts are running like the currents in a river . . . . Reading Hearstian newspapers and mulling over threadbare ideas sprinkled with a large dosage of a feeling of persecution and race

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, February 26, 1944.

> consciousness breeds uncertainty and fear in the minds of a people who do not have the benefit of a flowing, ebbing world. Day after day, faced with the situation which does not seem to have a solution, soon poisons the mind to the point of frustration and one soon reels with stagnation and hopelessness.[1]

It is difficult to evaluate accurately the consequences of relocation or the long-term effect it had on the dislocated Japanese families. Relocation and center life, however, apparently had a profound influence upon the impressionable younger Japanese generation, helping to break down close family relationships and hastening the Americanization of Japanese youths. One Minidoka girl explained that this process occurred as a result of barracks living conditions, which "allowed the younger group to be more American in their thinking, and to get further away from the older, parental influence of a Japanese code of living."[2] It was hard for the Nipponese culture to remain unaltered under such circumstances.

Harry Stafford, Minidoka's Project Director, was intimately connected with the problems associated with the ordeal of relocation. Upon the termination of his career with the WRA he made a statement which seems to summarize the whole tragic episode; "I believe the ramifications of evacuation, incarceration, relocation, and resettlement to have been a most unfortunate experience for evacuees and Government alike."[3] This governmental action has been judged unduly harsh by a later generation. Although it is in retrospect a stain on the honor of the United States, it becomes understandable, and indeed, inevitable when viewed in the light of the social situation and historical events which preceded it.

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[1] Minidoka Irrigator, June 24, 1944.

[2] Salt Lake Tribune, July 4, 1943.

[3] Stafford, Harry, "Project Director's Narrative," Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho. p. 10.

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