

OCT 21 1942

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

2055
University of California
Enemy Alien Study

THE GIANNINI FOUNDATION OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

SEP-8 '42 JHW 9/14/42
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September 2, 1942

Dr. Joseph H. Willits, Director
The Rockefeller Foundation
49 West 49th Street
New York City

Dear Joe Willits:

Thank you for your friendly letter. I am indeed delighted that our proposal is being presented to the Executive Committee for further consideration.

You ask for an informal sizing up of problems, progress, prospects and values.

Getting the study organized administratively was, as you can well imagine, a major problem. Clearance had to be obtained from at least four organizations at various stages: the War Relocation Authority, the Wartime Civilian Control Administration, the Works Progress Administration, and last but by no means least, the Army. And in respect to the WRA, the situation was further complicated by the necessity of obtaining cooperation on three levels: national, regional, and local. Not only have policies been modified from time to time, often quite radically, but personnel has shifted rapidly. The record of cooperation obtained under these circumstances is excellent, but we realize fully that new administrative problems will arise and that overcoming, circumventing and, at times, giving in to restrictions will continue for the duration of the study.

Getting trained research personnel was far less difficult. Keeping some of them may present difficulties, due to the draft situation. We now have a Caucasian field worker in each of the two relocation areas we are studying, one at Tule Lake, California, the other at Gila, Arizona. These workers are training the Japanese observers, working closely with them, and acting as a liason between the central office and the relocation project. The Japanese observers are preparing voluminous and carefully documented records. Their enthusiasm for the project is one of the most heartening things about the study. Two of them recently refused the chance of leaving the military zone to continue their education, one on the ground that "this sort of thing does not happen to everybody and I want to be a part of it" and the other pointing out that writing up social history of this sort was far more important to him than continuance of formal education at this time. The industry and productivity of these observers is astounding; one of them for example, has prepared a document of more than 700 typed pages at the Tanforan Assembly Center and he is now just beginning work in earnest at the Gila War Relocation Project.

I have been visiting the Tule Lake project often enough to keep in close touch with the situation, and I shall later, I hope, be able to follow the same procedure at Gila. I am now asking for field notes weekly and summaries, in terms of predetermined categories, twice a month. By checking back on these notes and raising questions while the situations are fresh in the observers' minds, I hope that I shall be able to build up a continuous and reliable sort of documentation. In addition, we are collecting a number of documents on the train of experience of individuals.

You ask about some of the "significant bits" that have turned up. You will understand that the following remarks are based on my personal impressions to date, and may well be modified later.

One of the most significant things that is turning up is the conflict between Japanization and Americanization. Many of the second generation were thoroughly Americanized both in behavior and attitudes, whereas an appreciable part of the immigrant group has remained quite Japanese, in many cases never even learning English. There is, of course, no complete division into groups of "first generation" and "second generation" in this respect: some of the Issei (first generation) are thoroughly Americanized and unquestionably loyal to this country; some of the Nisei (second generation) prefer Japanese ways of behaving to American. Nevertheless, the struggle for control within the community is largely an Issei versus Nisei matter. Because of the date at which immigration was cut off, the Nisei represent a very young and inexperienced group. There are very few over twenty-five years of age. The extent to which they will be able to hold out against the "Japanesey" influence of the older generation is decidedly worth watching ^{and} the weakening of the American influences, which will be inevitable if they are concentrated and isolated for the duration of what may well be a long war. There is evidence to the effect that the efforts to "Japanize" the younger groups are by no means merely casual and random. In both the communities we are studying, anti-Caucasian feeling is developing rapidly and is becoming a very serious matter of concern. It is manifested by strikes as well as isolated episodes of violence against suspected "informers". It springs up in recreation programs, in talent shows, in religious meetings.

Effect on study?

Another of the more interesting developments is the extent to which the group as a whole will be receptive to the type of community organization which the WRA is implanting. A society is being "planned" for them in which class and economic strata have been, for the time being, largely abolished. But a highly stratified group such as this does not lose its traditional evaluation of wealth, of occupation, of learning, overnight. Spontaneous interest groups are forming in competition with the super-imposed groups. Private enterprise is springing up, in rudimentary form, beside the officially sanctioned cooperatives. There are many carry-overs of the old rivalries between classes, between urban people and rural people, between Northerners and Southerners.

A further development, of great importance from the long run point of view, is the breakdown of the traditional attitude against accepting relief or handouts from the government. The Japanese have been almost unknown to the charity and relief agencies. When they first entered the Assembly centers, there was great reluctance toward accepting anything

from the Government, even on the part of those who were actually destitute. That situation has changed rapidly and radically. Long lines form when "scrip books" are to be issued. There was one strike because shoes had not been provided for the agricultural workers. Dependence on the government for necessities is taken pretty much as a matter of course. When you consider the fact that a large part of these people were impoverished by the process of evacuation, due both to the fact that no organized means of protecting their property interests was devised until weeks after the evacuation process had begun and also to the fact that those of the service, small business and professional classes were drawn away from the situation in which it was possible for them to be self-supporting, their acceptance of the paternalism of the government in providing for their wants may well have consequences similar to those we now face in regard to the Indians. It should be pointed out that board and lodging are provided and that the basic cash wage is very low: a maximum of \$19 per month for "professionals"; a minimum of \$12 for unskilled workers. It is impossible, on this wage, to provide for example, the type of clothing required in certain of the communities. Tule Lake, for example, has subzero weather frequently during the winter months, while the evacuees have come from a climate where only light weight clothing was needed. Hence the government must (and of course will) provide. ✓

Another interesting development is the growth of a sort of hedonistic attitude towards marriage among many of the young people. Before Pearl Harbor, the marriage rate among Nisei was very low. Economic insecurity was a serious barrier. Now there is evidence of a feeling that "you might as well enjoy yourself" and marriages are being planned and entered into with little thought of the future. As might be expected, there is also evidence of a breakdown, in some instances, of the rather strict standards of sexual morality which had characterized the group. The future population development here is, again, worth watching. ✓

One of the most challenging situations is in respect to the inventiveness and ingenuity of the colonists in meeting new situations and devising a new way of life. The college students, for example, are at present, cut off from continuation of their studies, for we have not yet even been able to arrange extension teaching for them. The following quotation from a letter from one of my students shows what a small group is doing. "Frank is coaching me in social psychology; we are starting with some of his notes on Blumer, and from there we plan to go through Park and Burgess, Cooley, Mead, Dewey, W.I., and Sumner. Naj is going to teach me statistics (up to correlation analysis) and economic theory (Marshall, Chamberlin, Robinson, Hicks, and Keynes). Michi is teaching us all music appreciation. In return I have to teach public speaking and possibly racialism later on (one of my major fields of interest, which incidentally I should like to take for a field for my degree if I may). I have a feeling that we will all come out of this experience with more than we went in with." Other experiments are in the adult education field generally, and of course, in drama and the arts. Handicrafts are flourishing. The inventiveness in utilizing scrap lumber

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Dr. Joseph H. Willits

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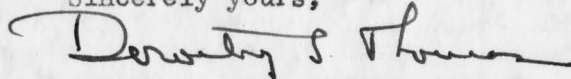
to make furniture, and the transformation of barracks into liveable homes is quite remarkable. Social experimentation is also going on in connection with many aspects of their life: I have mentioned the fact that a "planned society" is being, to a great extent, implanted on the evacuees. But all of the projects are understaffed administratively, so the chance of introducing new forms and modifications of the specified forms is considerable. The study of their evolution is a fascinating business.

Finally, I think the most important scientific value of the whole study is the analysis of the incidence, change, modification, and persistence of the many conflicting ways of behavior under the impact of a crisis which broke the established line of experience of a large population group. ✓

I realize that the above is probably both more and less than what you asked for. I will keep you informed of the process of "change, modification, and persistence" of my own ideas.

You must know how much I appreciate your kindness, and your encouragement. Thank you once again.

Sincerely yours,



Dorothy Swaine Thomas
Professor of Rural Sociology

DST/vp