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Memphis, Tenn.
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Relocation Center For Japs Torn By Waste And Turmoil

Denson, Ark., Setup Is Far From Utopian Goal—Correspondent Says Evacuees Toss Food Away And Make No Effort To Aid Selves

By EUGENE RUTLAND
Staff Correspondent

DENSON, Ark., Jan. 2—Dreams of an ideal relocation center where some 8000 Japanese-American West Coast evacuees would be almost self-supporting for the duration have turned into a nightmare of confusion, waste of food, slow-down strikes, refusal to work and threats against construction workers at the Jerome Relocation Center. The evacuees began moving into the center here on Oct. 8.

Investigating reports of "deplorable conditions and silk glove handling of evacuees" from high officials of the War Relocation Authority and the United States Engineers at the center, The Commercial Appeal learned that:

They Throw Food Away

Three truckloads of Japanese evacuees recently cornered H. H. Hobbs, assistant area engineer, United States Engineers, and Leonard Hall, foreman, and threatened to kill them during a "curfew" at an isolated spot in the camp before military guards who were helpless to intervene inside the center.

War Relocation Administration officials are having difficulty getting coal unloaded from railroad

cars and trucked to the black kitchens because the Japanese-Americans "do not like to handle coal." The coal is used to fire the stoves used in preparing meals for the evacuees.

Japanese-American cooks and their assistants are wasteful or careless in preparation of food, throwing away much food that is edible. An inspection of garbage pits showed evidence of this.

Reputable officials of the construction company reported that one of the men hauling garbage from the camp found partial sacks of potatoes, quantities of oranges, apples and grapefruit in good condition in the garbage pits.

Supplies Sabotaged

Paul Taylor, project manager, said that he would begin an investigation of the alleged sabotage of the food supplies at the center.

On Dec. 16 the project manager asked for 300 volunteers to chop wood to relieve a critical fuel shortage. Thirty-seven responded on the next day and on Dec. 18, "Communiqué" official bulletin of the center said that Mr. Taylor "expressed his antipathy of the

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signup and declared if volunteers continue to come in, the critical wood situation would be solved in a short time.

Demurrage Charges Mount

Construction officials reported that the evacuees "knock off" whenever they like to have tea. The Communique said, "The serving of hot tea to men on the wood detail was started yesterday (Dec. 17)."

The American Association of Railroads has protested the delay in unloading carloads of lumber at the center. Reports from construction officials were that the demurrage charges on the lumber totaled more than \$3000.

Evacuees refused to unload the lumber at first but finally agreed to unload the cars. They threw the lumber into water filled ditches along the tracks instead of stacking it. The lumber is for the construction of schools at the camp.

WRA has had to issue a special contract for clearing a space for a drainage ditch. A crew of 90 evacuees felled six trees in a day.

Carpenters Union No. 690 has protested to Senators Caraway and McClelland and Representative Norrell and WRA Director Myer over plans to use Japanese-Americans in the construction of work totaling \$120,000 at the Center.

Material Stolen

WRA is planning to give indefinite furloughs to 25 per cent of the evacuees who can find employment.

Many school teachers are on the pay roll and no schools are in operation.

Thefts of material from contractors have been reported to WRA authorities and no action has been taken.

Recently these reports were presented to Mr. Taylor, Robert A. Leflar, project attorney, and Charles Lynn, public relations officer and they discussed the reports freely.

Mr. Taylor denied at first that there were any difficulties between the workers and evacuees but when told of the threats against Mr. Hobbs admitted that there had been a misunderstanding.

"We had some of the evacuees working on the back section," said Mr. Taylor. "At the hearing the evacuees said that Mr. Hobbs began the argument, which turned into a 'cussfest' and that Mr. Hobbs and Mr. Ball left."

Mr. Hobbs, who is Col. A. M. Niemi's representative at the center, said that he told an evacuee truck driver to move his truck out of the way so he could get past. Colonel Niemi is head of the United States Engineers force which is in charge of construction of the camp.

"When he didn't do it I got out to see what was the matter and two other Japanese truck drivers loaded with evacuees cornered our truck," Mr. Hobbs said. "They jumped out of the truck and began hollering, 'Kill them, kill them.' We got back in the truck and worked

our way free and reported the incident to Mr. Taylor."

Police Looked On

Mr. Hobbs said that the WRA official told him that he was sorry that he couldn't help him because it happened on a United States Reservation and urged him to handle the Japanese with care. Mr. Hobbs said that the driver did not get so much as a reprimand from the project director.

"We have taken the boy off the truck," said Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Hobbs said that the incident took place in full view of the Military Police, but they are not permitted to come within the center proper without a request from the project manager.

E. B. Whitaker, field director of the WRA, said the reason the military police do not patrol the inside of the center is because it would take too many soldiers, who are needed elsewhere. There is an internal security division of the WRA which has charge of the policing inside the center. This division is headed by one man with some assistance from the evacuees. Mr. Whitaker said it is planned to have additional white officers but he had not been able to obtain them yet.

Mr. Taylor said that the WRA is having some difficulty getting the Japanese-Americans to unload coal because they don't like to handle it. He said that he got a group of them to unload the coal. Reputable persons at the center said that this group sat down and unloaded the coal lump by lump instead of using shovels.

Asked about the reported partial sacks of potatoes and fruit found in the garbage pails, Mr. Taylor said that he had not heard that report before and pointed out that "it would only mean that some of the evacuees would go hungry."

O. E. Owens, Dermott farmer, who pays the center approximately \$25 a week for the privilege of hauling the garbage from the center, told The Commercial Appeal that he had found partial sacks of food in the garbage pails.

"Waste Is Terrible"

"The waste there is terrible and something ought to be done about it," Mr. Owens said indignantly. "They waste enough there every day to feed the entire town of Dermott."

Officials of the center have already discussed the food situation with Mr. Owens. He is feeding more than 700 bogs daily with the garbage he gathers at the center.

Accompanied by James Matrux, superintendent, and Dick Young, supervisor of the Rife Construction Co., who were inspecting some of the buildings this week, this reporter saw in several of the garbage pails vegetables that had been mutilated and thrown away.

Commenting on the delay in unloading and stacking the lumber, and the complaint of the American Association of Railroads, Mr. Taylor said, "we could have complained about them getting too

many cars in at one time. We shouldn't handle it. I don't know what the demurrage charges are and will not until the bills come."

We saw some of the lumber still in the ditches along the railroad getting water soaked. Some of it still lay scattered and hundreds of the evacuees were loafing, which seems to be a pastime at the center.

Mr. Taylor said that the special contract for clearing the way for the drainage ditch was let because the center was not geared to handle trees and stumps in water. He had no comment to make on the report that 90 evacuees cut only six trees in a day.

This report was verified by Linwood Smith, of Lake Village, Ark., the drainage contractor.

Under proposed plans the WRA will use evacuees to build three schools, and more than 10 administration buildings. The cost will be about \$120,000. Carpenter's Union No. 690 has protested against this.

The evacuees have already begun construction on the administration buildings, which are about 20 x 100 feet. In five weeks a crew of at least 30 men have succeeded in erecting the framing for one building and the floor on a second. The foundations were laid by the Rife Construction Company at the request of the WRA.

Construction officials said that the buildings could be erected in a few days with trained workmen and at a saving to the taxpayers.

Without school buildings the staff of teachers is having little to do. Folding chairs were received only a few days ago.

An intelligent Japanese-American, who had a responsible position in California and who is a college graduate, said that the "WRA has seen it has made a mistake and is making arrangements to let out about 25 per cent of us.

"I believe that they made a mistake by not waiting until the Tolson Investigating Committee report was finished before setting up these large camps. We are not working and it demoralizes us," he said.

Japs Want To Farm

"If they had put us in small inland camps and let us farm we would be producing a lot of food. As it is it's killing ambition of those of us who want to work."

Construction officials said that they have received little or no cooperation from WRA officials in recovery of stolen equipment and tools. A foreman said that two kegs of nails and 10 boxes of hardware were stolen from a warehouse.

Mr. Taylor paid scant attention to this report saying that "they were reported stolen from a center and that the evacuees had little use for the hardware."

Construction officials, who have been erecting the center for six months, were critical of the "silk-glove" treatment that the WRA officials are giving the evacuees.

A survey of the warehouses at the center revealed that by purchases through the War Department the Japanese-Americans are getting first class meats, the same kind served men in the armed forces. In the center's large and modern cold storage plant are thousands of pounds of first class beef and lamb crates of fruits, celery, oranges, apples, fresh vegetables and hundreds of pounds of bacon and hams.

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One of the Japanese chefs said that meat is served twice a week in the form of steaks or stew. An order of 21,000 pounds of beef is used every three weeks. The cen-

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ter can get the meat because it orders through the United States Army Depot.

Mr. Taylor said that coffee is being rationed and that it is being served once a day. One of the chefs said that cocoa, tea and coffee are served daily, but was limited because of the sugar rationing.

Three construction employees charged that the Japanese-American dining room charged excessive prices for meals on rainy days. They said that for 50 cents they got one slice of baloney, three slices of bread, two spoons of potato salad and a cup of coffee.

There were other reports which the WRA or construction officials should turn over to the Army intelligence so that the reports could be proven false or the dangerous conditions removed. Mr. Taylor laughed off these reports, which were of a serious nature if true.

Furlough Plans Made

Mr. Taylor said that plans are under way to give indefinite furloughs to evacuees who are able to get jobs. Ten or 12 evacuees had been given furloughs but none have located in Arkansas, although Mr. Taylor said that he has had some requests from citizens in the state.

Mr. Whitaker said no specific percentage has been fixed on the number of evacuees to be given furloughs.

"We are going to let all go who can meet the regulations," he said. In other words their records must be approved by the FBI, the War Department and the WRA. They must have a place to work before they can leave and they must be acceptable to the community into which they go. They will not be permitted to replace any other worker. We will not permit any to leave and go into Arkansas."

Some 200 evacuees were given leave from the center with chaperon to go Christmas shopping. He pointed out that they were taken from the camps in trucks and returned to the center in trucks. They shopped for groups.

It was pointed out by Mr. Leflar, the WRA attorney, that the evacuees when they leave the center

do not have to report back to the center, but to the WRA in Washington. They report when they change locations.

Mr. Taylor, the project supervisor, was born near Watson Chapel in Jefferson County, Ark. He is a graduate of the University of Arkansas and has been with the United States Department of Agriculture since 1928, serving with the Agricultural War Relations and Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

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Another typical scene is this group of Japanese-Americans discussing games they will play while in their new wartime home. Agnes Uyesugi with bow in hair is recreation director at Rohwer Center near McGehee, Ark.

Two Lower Photos by Associated Press

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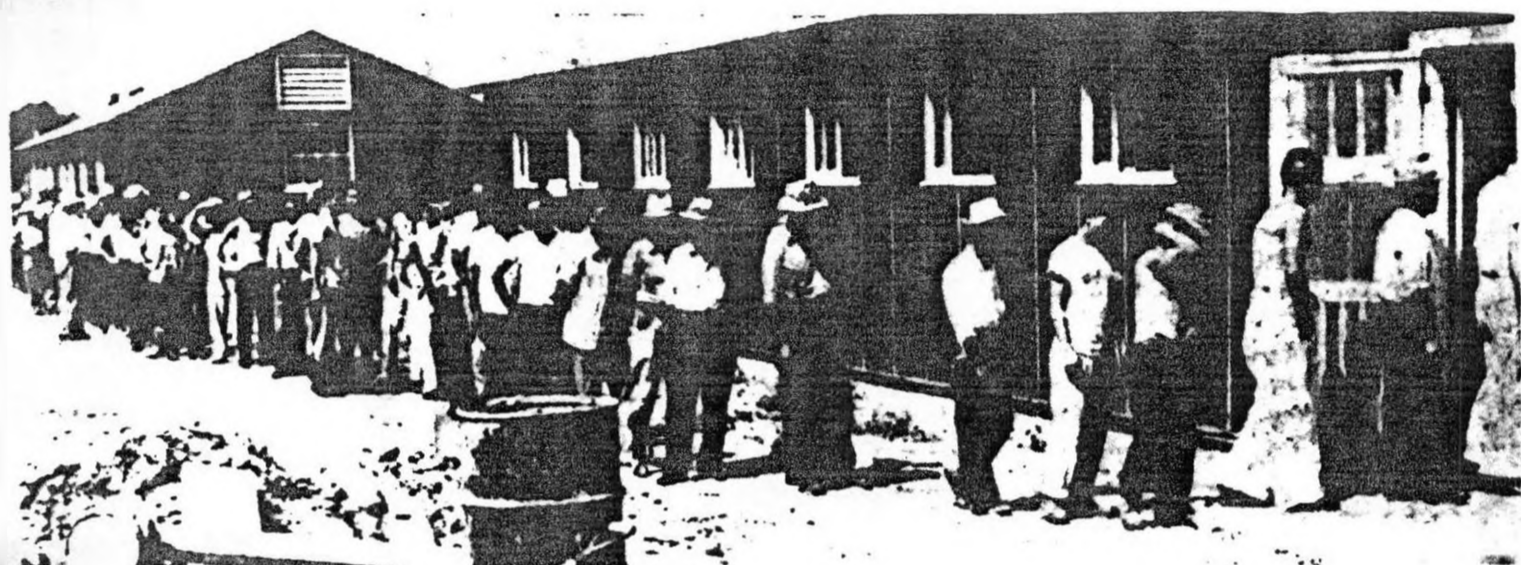
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Photos Belie Unrest Prevailing Among Transplanted Japanese

The Japanese in the Jerome Relocation Center at Denson, Ark. find time each day to get out a bulletin which they call the "Communique." It deals with such mundane things as Household Goods to Arrive Soon, Firewood Solution Expected to Satisfy and the like but the back page is always in Japanese characters, as shown in top photo.

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This is a typical scene (center) at the Relocation Center at meal time. Here men who formed an advance contingent to aid in the construction are shown lined up for their noon meal.