

Registratic Reports and conversations at Rohwer, Arkansas
February 20, 1943

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Telephone conversation on February 20 at 11:00 A.M. -- Colonel Scobey and Lt. Hughes with Captain Holbrook and two Japanese leaders at Rohwer.

S: All right, I'll be glad to talk to him. Mr. Santo, can you hear me?

Sa: Yes.

S: I want to give you an expression of the War Department for the Japanese because it appeared that they were not quite satisfied as to the sincerity and integrity of the proposition that is being made by the War Department. That is reflected in the reports that have been coming back both in volunteering and registering, and in the number of questions that are being asked. I'm Mr. McCloy's Executive, -- he is the Assistant Secretary of War, and the one who has fathered this idea and this plan. Mr. McCloy has been very much concerned about the entire Japanese situation. He feels that we cannot afford to allow our Japanese citizens and our loyal Japanese to remain in relocation centers, that after all a military urgency and necessity caused a great deal of suffering for them, a lot of misery, and a great many unfortunate matters, but that is passed. Now we either have to again a rehabilitation process or we just stand still, and when we do that there will be a general retrogression. The citizen's rights will be impaired still further. As you know, a great many people in this country, their elements among the caucasians, have no love whatever for the Japanese, and most of that is due to ignorance, because a great many of them are not even aware that there are citizens among our Japanese. So Mr. McCloy, in all sincerity, has worked out a plan to help them. It is not a complete plan. It constitutes only a beginning of what we hope will be a full rehabilitation at some future date. Now the War Department, and Mr. Stimson, speaking for the War Department, made an announcement on January 28 about this. You are familiar with that, are you not?

Sa: Yes.

SL Then the President of the United States made a statement in a letter which he wrote to Mr. Stimson and which has been published to you. You are familiar with that, are you not?

Sa: It seems like the majority of the people in this center have not seen that particular letter in the public newspapers of the country.

S: I don't think the President's letter has been generally published, but it has been published in some of them here in the East, but the point I want to make this morning is as follows: this plan, as I suggested, is not a full rehabilitation of the Japanese rights as citizens. It constitutes a beginning, and unless we get the full

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cooperation of this much of the plan, and sure that you support those who have supported you, it will make our position very difficult. You have here in Washington a great many sincere friends who have worked unceasingly and under great difficulties for you. Now if the Japanese, themselves, do not support this plan fully, it not only excludes any great help for yourself, but it definitely hurts the people who are trying to help you, because then those of the population who dislike the Japanese will say, "Why, that's what we told you would happen. They wouldn't do anything about it." Now that's the situation in a nut shell. As I said, you have people working hard for you to put this over in the face of difficulty, and it's entirely up to the Japanese people now. We've put it in their laps, and they must for their own sakes look upon this as an opportunity and support it fully. Should they not do so it will be almost impossible for us to go on further with this plan, which we hope to do. We want to get all of the loyal Japanese out into localities where they can have self-respect, where they are not stigmatized by, as some people seem to think, residence in internment camps,--which you are not, of course. You are not interned, but to give you an opportunity to go out into the world and to accept your place as any other American. Now the very essential part of that plan is to show the people who do not understand the Japanese that we have in our Army a Japanese unit, American citizens, who are willing to fight for their country, and that is an incontrovertible fact that they are loyal, don't you see. The temper of the American people was easily shown after the last War when a large number of Issei who had fought for the United States were given citizenship. Some of these Issei, who are now American citizens, have felt very badly because they were not treated right in their opinion. I think they are entitled to feel that way about it. But we are endeavoring with every facility that we have to see that these people do get their just privileges and rights. Now some opposition has come up as ~~the~~ to the segregation feature of this unit. In answer to that I might say that this was considered very fully and carefully by the War Department. We have at the present time over 2500 Japanese throughout all of our various units. There is no segregation there. The purpose of the apparent segregation was to have a Japanese Combat Team which would constitute a symbol of the loyalty of the Japanese. Should we take these 4500 Japanese and spread them out throughout the Army no such symbol would exist. Do I make that point clear?

SA: Yes

S: It's only the symbol of this combat team that we can hold up before the people of this country and say, "Here's a Japanese-American Unit that will fight for this country, it's their country as well. There, fore, since they so generously fight, that is evidence that the Japanese are loyal to their country. Now we can get that unit by induction, but then again if they are inducted, the people who do not like the Japanese would say, "Well, they wouldn't fight voluntarily, but they fight because they have to, don't you see?" In other words

- S: the voluntary feature of it is an essential feature. We don't need the 4500 Japanese, by any means,--that is a mere drop in the bucket and it is not essential to our war effort, we're not after it for that purpose. The sole purpose of this combat team which we expect to have, 3000 from this country and 1500 from Hawaii, is the symbol which we hope to show forth to the country itself. Now a large number of our Japanese citizens, and the Issei too, and we feel that the Issei in many instances are just as loyal as the Nesei, because after all many of them have children in the Army. But one attitude seems to be we will just sit and wait and see what happens. That's an attitude that is negative entirely and serves no good purpose for either you or us. In other words, it is essential that the Japanese now having been given an opportunity to do something, to go part of the way, must enthusiastically support that; if you don't then the whole plan is seriously jeopardized. I'm acting very sincerely, about this, Mr. Ando, because Mr. McCloy himself has evolved the plan, he's worked for it, he worked against opposition for you, and we feel here in Washington that the Japanese must not let us down on this. If they do, it doesn't help any of us at all. Have I made the points clear to you?
- SA: Yes. I can understand.
- S: We sent our officer down there, this team, the officer and the three enlisted men and one of them was a Japanese, as our representatives. I think they can fully explain it to you. They are down there to help you on this and to serve you. The Japanese soldier that's down there, the ~~sergeant~~ sergeant, can tell you the whole story on the thing. He understands it fully, I'm sure. Are there any questions you would like to ask me.
- SA: Well there are some questions that have been brought up that seem very difficult for anyone in this camp to answer. In the first place there has been no publicity clarifying the position of these loyal people to the citizens at large.
- S: Well that isn't true. We sent down editorials from 14, no 20 some odd papers over the country. Most of these were very favorable to the plan. So that isn't true, there has been quite a lot of publicity, but after all to the American people isn't important as it is to you. It isn't headlined in the paper. We have 130,000,000 people in this country and there are about 110,000 Japanese. None of these papers will headline the story. It is a question of news evaluation, and I suppose it is just as well that they do not headline it. But actually there have been over 25 papers, daily papers, throughout the country from New York to Denver, that have had editorials on this and I believe these comments were sent down there, were they not Lt. Hughes.
- H: Yes Sir. At that point, Colonel, I would like to read part of an editorial from the Post Intell---- - at Seattle.

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S: Excuse me please, as I will have to go at this point, and I will let Lt. Hughes talk to you. Only I want to add one thing. I sincerely hope that the Japanese people down there, both the Nesei and the Issei who are loyal, will support this now. Now the people who want to go back to Japan, that's all right with us, we will be very happy to send them back. We don't want them, and if any body monkeys with this, with our induction processes, we here in Washington and in the Department of Justice are prepared to move against them. But we want to protect the loyal Japanese, both the Issei and the Nesei, and we want to get a hold of the disloyal ones and send them back to Japan. We don't want them. Now I will have to go as I have an appointment and I'll let Lt. Hughes talk to you.

SA: All right. Thank you very much.

H: With reference to your point about the general publicity of this, we have received many editorials throughout the country. As you can appreciate, not all of them are favorable but I can say definitely that 95% are strongly in favor of this plan. Here is one from the "Baltimore Sun": "the Japanese Unit will be a visible, tangible denial of the German theory that this is a racial war. Our enemy is not any race, but barbarism which invades all races. We are not fighting the Japanese because they are Japanese, or the Germans because they are Germans, but because they seek to impose upon mankind the tyranny against which we have been struggling for many generations. Tyranny is the enemy, and a liberty-loving Japanese must hate it as much as any other man. If he hates it, we can help him to strike a blow against it." Here is the one I started to read from the Seattle Post Intel----- where, as you know, throughout the West you have the greatest percentage of opposition. They end up by saying, "The loyal are entitled to establish their standing. Either in the Army or in industry it will be easy to establish the affectiveness of the groups, and much easier to determine the attitude of the individual, than by retaining them permanently in relocation centers." We have, I would say, a hundred editorials here and I can assure that 95% of them are favorable. Now, I want to get back to one point that Colonel Scobey mentioned, that the real reaction of the American public will come from the news regarding the combat team, that is, after the team is formed on a voluntary basis. That will be something definite and concrete to lay before the people who oppose the loyal Japanese and say, "These citizens of Japanese ancestry are ready and willing to take their places beside your sons. They will fight, they will do other things which loyal Americans will do. Here is the concrete test. They have volunteered; if necessary, they are willing to die the same as your son. Can you ask any more of a loyal American citizen?" We cannot emphasize too much the voluntary aspect. We realize that there is considerable sentiment in the center for the application of the Selective Service Act. It would have been far easier to have applied this act and to have said that every man of military age will be drafted. It is because we are willing to permit you to make this symbol which can be displayed to the American people, that we have deviated from the

H: normal course. We have not followed the easiest procedure ~~that~~/we but we wished to permit you to create a symbol which can be shown to those forces opposed to you. Here's an editorial from the Chronicle of San Francisco, which has been opposed in the past: "Loyal Citizens" it's headed. "For some time it has been obvious that loyal citizens ought not to be shut up in camps, with loyal Japanese American citizens or otherwise. It has taken some time to work out the problem, but the process of separating these out and using them for useful employment is on the way. The decision of the War Department to treat these like other citizens in the mustering of men for the Armed Forces will gratify all who felt that the only proper test in their case is loyalty, not racial origin!" That precisely is our position. We have against considerable opposition worked out this program. The program is now in way in the centers. The decision is for the individual. We cannot and do not attempt to tell you what you must do. We can only point out what the consequences would be and how they would affect you, your children, and your children's children. You must realize that the reaction to this program, its success or its failure, will determine the faith of the Japanese in the U. S. for many years to come. We have felt also that the rather low percentage of volunteers in your center is not indicative of the true spirit there. Frankly speaking, you ~~don't~~ do not have anywhere near the same percentage of volunteers that the other centers have. We obtained more the first morning in Manzanar than have volunteered out of your entire center. We do not believe that is the true spirit in Rohwer. We can only bring this to your attention with the hope that you can lay it before the people in Rohwer and explain it and convince them of the sincerity of the War Department and of the fact that you have friends here. The final decision must be for you; we cannot make that for you, but only by the results will you be judged. We must leave that to you, but the final result is in your hands. I hope you are able to present that to the members of your center and convince them that we are sincere and in earnest. By all means emphasize that the faith of the Japanese in this country for future generation is going to be tied up in this program. If this program is not effective, it is not known if any other attempt will be made to aid and assist the loyal Japanese in this country. Are there any other questions which you have?

SA: Well perhaps in the way of a question I would like to bring out this angle. It seems that out here in this locality the job opportunities has been such in the centers located around Poston, Colorado, and Utah that the thing that seems to worry the majority of the boys is not the question of loyalty but it is the matter of their future. They are hesitant because they have assurance of what will be the disposition of the remaining members of the family or how they will make a living.

H: We can answer that by saying this,--that for those families who have sons in the service who volunteer, --they will receive the first consideration of employment. The employment division of the W.R.A. has announced and definitely takes the position that the

- H: first consideration on employment will go to the families of those sons who volunteer. We realize that you have a more difficult problem there in Arkansas than you do in other areas. That is being considered. Efforts are being made to open up all parts of the country for your return except the West Coast area. That much at the present time cannot be done, but this is a step in that direction. You must realize that we have to take it by steps and certainly the greater industrial areas of this country will be available for employment of loyal Japanese Americans. Does that help you on that part of the problem?
- SA: I will explain that item a little further. I believe there is another reaction to the effect that since a lot of these boys will be leaving their aged parents behind regardless of whether they are loyal, they doubt whether they will have an opportunity to get employment an account of their being aged.
- H: I can carry that to the next answer then. As I understand it, the War Relocation Authority is not forcing anyone out of the center. If they desire to remain in the center, they may. That question on Form 26 about employment has been changed, as you know, and it is not the position of the War Relocation Authority to compel anyone to go out unless they desire to do so. If they have aged or infirm parents, it seems to me that the logical solution is for them to remain in the War Relocation centers where they are well cared for, housed, hospitalized, and looked after. But any of them who desire to go outside will be given the first opportunity, if they have sons or other members of their family in the service. But the choice will be for the individual. They will not be compelled to do so.
- SAL: There's one more question. Is the administration taking any official steps to counteract some of the anti-legislation and anti-sentiment that is being expressed throughout the country?
- H: The answer to that is definitely yes.
- SA: However, is Washington taking any official steps?
- H: You have President' Roosevelt's statement on that in which he says the present program has my complete approval. That is a statement from the highest official in the land.
- SA: Will publicity be given on that?
- H: Publicity is being given on that, as well as the other aspects of the program. I have read you some of the editorial policy of the country and I will say that 95% of the newspapers that have expressed themselves are favorable. Now you must realize one thing. We are definitely fighting your battle. We are doing what we can for you.

- H: But this program can proceed only by mutual confidence and faith. It is not a bargaining proposition. You must have faith in us the same as we have faith in you. You must accept that which is offered. It is not complete rehabilitation, but it is the first step in that direction. Unless you have faith in your friends, those people who are giving you the opportunity towards complete rehabilitation, there is no possibility that the program will succeed. Do you have any other questions?
- SA: No, that is about all I can say at the time. Will you hold the line just a minute please.
- H: All right.
- : Colonel Scobey, we have Mr. Fugiyama here too. I would like to have you talk to him just a second.
- H: All right
- F: Hello. I want to express one point on this. In this Rohwer Center it so happens that (unclear)
- H: If you will put Captain Holbrook on the line, I will tell him to remain there until everyone has had a complete opportunity to understand the program, to digest exactly what it means to them and to their future in this country, and what it means to their children and their children's children. This program is not something of the moment. It will carry forward in the history of the Japanese in the United States. We believe in you and we believe you should have a complete opportunity to explain fully just what it means, and I will be glad to tell Captain Holbrook to stay there until each person has been given the opportunity to understand exactly what this program means to him
- Hol: Lieutenant, this is Captain Holbrook.
- H: Yes Sir. Captain, you have heard my conversation with Mr. Fugiyama. That's Colonel Scobey's orders,--that each person be given the opportunity to understand completely what this program means. Colonel Scobey wants every individual to think over this, to realize that he is not making a decision as whether or not he joins the Army, but to understand completely that this program will have a bearing on their future life in this country. We want you to cooperate, we want to have each person given a complete knowledge of the result of his decision. We want the decision to be the choice of the individual, but see that he understands what he is doing. Impress upon him the gravity of his action, explain carefully what the voluntary aspect means. His friends in the War Department are fighting his battle, but emphasize again that the ultimate decision is for the individual. We can only make the means possible; we cannot decide the question. Do you have any questions?

Hol: No Sir. I listened to the entire conversation from the beginning to end, and want to assure you that every point that has been mentioned has been gone into in great detail.

H: Well you tell Mr. Santo for us and Mr. Fugiana to take this message back to each person in the center: that it is only by their choice can their future course of action be determined; that their friends can only go so far, but the ultimate result of the program, the final answer, must be given by the Japanese themselves. Stay there, give us a report, say in two days, call us on Monday as to the result of this conversation, and do not leave until we have told you to go.

Hol: All right Sir. Lieutenant, there is just one thing that does prop up here quite often, and while it has been covered in the conversation here today, still the question, the way it is put, is this: why should the Japanese-Americans have to reprove their loyalty by fighting for the United States?

H: Why shall they reprove their loyalty? That has two answers. In the first place, every loyal American citizen is fighting for his country, not by way of proof, but it is one of the obligations or duties that a citizen performs, something that a citizen willingly performs. That is the basic answer. It is not a question of reprovng. As a secondary answer to that

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