

COLONEL KARL BENDETSSEN

Telephone Conversation -

and

9 July 1943 at 4:10 P. M.

CAPTAIN JOHN M. HALL

B: PROPOSED STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The evacuation of all Japanese from the West Coast to the Interior of the U.S. was made necessary for reasons of military security. As time was of the essence, there was no alternative to the action taken. The surprise attack at Pearl Harbor by the enemy crippled a major portion of the Pacific fleet and exposed the West Coast to an attack which could not have been substantially impeded by defensive fleet operation. Despite the improvement in our military situation and the restoration of the Pacific fleet the capabilities of the enemy are such as still to jeopardize the security of the West Coast. Under these conditions, it is not the intention of the Federal Government to permit the return to the West Coast for residence of Japanese, whether American or foreign born. The policies of the Commanding General, Western Defense Command with this regard, adopted in close consultation with the War Department, have been and will be supported.

Because it was necessary to clear the West Coast of all persons of Japanese ancestry rapidly, it also became necessary to establish housing to which this population could be evacuated, and there to provide shelter, food, and the many other facilities essential for the maintenance of a community. The Army executed the task of evacuation and provided Centers for shelter. To relieve the Army from further responsibility, the WRA was created by my order with exclusive responsibility to administer these centers and the attendant problems of relocation.

The evacuation of these people did not constitute a determination as to their loyalty or disloyalty, nor did their assembly in the ten Relocation Centers built by the Army, and now administered by WRA, constitute the internment of these people. They are not internees or prisoners of war. It was never the intention of the Government from the beginning to confine all of them in these centers for the duration of the war. It has always been, and still remains the intention to assist those, whose loyalty have been definitely and fully examined and established, to locate themselves as rapidly as feasible ~~elsewhere~~ elsewhere than on the West Coast, and to resume living under conditions as nearly normal as possible, the same as all other residents of the United States whose loyalties are not doubted. The fact of Japanese ancestry alone is not a reason for continued confinement. That would be racial discrimination.

Recently the War, Navy, and Justice Departments together with War Relocation Authority have established a Joint Board to examine the records of each evacuee. All information available to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of Naval Intelligence, the Military Intelligence Service and the War Relocation Authority regarding each evacuee's loyalty is examined and on the basis of careful evaluation, recommendations are made to the Director of WRA concerning whether an evacuee should or should not be eligible for release.

Those whose loyalties are doubted or who are known to be disloyal will not be released; they will be segregated from the others and confined in camps for the duration. The Army is prepared to assist WRA in providing the necessary transportation and to escort movements to these Segregation Camps. The Army will

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guard these Centers with sufficient troops to insure security.

The others who are not found to be disloyal will be released, as they can be absorbed in various communities other than on the West Coast, where acceptable.

One of the many ways in which loyal Japanese Americans will join their fellow U. S. citizens in furthering our conduct of the war will be through military service. The Army has organized a Japanese American Combat Unit now in training, which includes many persons who were formerly evacuees. The men in this unit are loyal Americans who will fight for the U.S. against our enemies, as is their privilege and duty. Other evacuees will engage in agricultural and industrial pursuits contributing their ~~ENERGIES~~ energies and skills to the serious manpower shortage. It must be remembered that nearly 25,000 Japanese residents of the U. S., citizens and aliens, have resided elsewhere than on the West Coast for many years, where they have followed various occupations, living in harmony with their neighbors. These have never been in Government Centers.

I have asked the American Red Cross (or some Fed. Agency) to survey Relocation Centers and to prepare a complete report covering conditions within them. I have also asked the Director, WRA to prepare an authoritative statement concerning plans with respect to future operation. I will forward these reports to the Senate as soon as they have been completed and sent to me.