

4849

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION

WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

THE WHITE HOUSE

April 22, 1943

APR 24 8 26 AM '43

RECEIVED

The President
The White House

Dear Mr. President:

It may be that you intended sending the enclosed letter to Mr. Dillon S. Myer, the Director of the War Relocation Authority, for the preparation of a reply. Although I have had no official connection with the Japanese relocation program since last June, I have prepared the attached reply for your signature to Secretary Ickes. I would like, however, to offer a few comments on the Secretary's letter.

My friends in the War Relocation Authority, like Secretary Ickes, are deeply distressed over the effects of the entire evacuation and relocation program upon the Japanese-Americans, particularly upon the young citizen group. Persons in this group find themselves living in an atmosphere for which their public school and democratic teachings have not prepared them. It is hard for them to escape a conviction that their plight is due more to racial discrimination, economic motivations, and wartime prejudices than to any real necessity from the military point of view for evacuation from the West Coast.

Life in a relocation center cannot possibly be pleasant. The evacuees are surrounded by barbed wire fences under the eyes of armed military police. They have suffered heavily in property losses; they have lost their businesses and their means of support. The State Legislatures, Members of the Congress, and local groups, by their actions and statements bring home to them almost constantly that as a people they are not really welcome anywhere. States in which they are now located have enacted restrictive legislation forbidding permanent settlement, for example. The American Legion, many local groups, and city councils have approved discriminatory resolutions, going so far in some instances as to advocate confiscation of their property. Bills have been introduced which would deprive them of citizenship. In this atmosphere, the Japanese-Americans cannot but know that when they are invited to a community



it is usually due to an extreme labor shortage and does not necessarily represent a permanent opportunity. They also know that some of the military leaders responsible for evacuation were motivated by a conviction that all persons of Japanese blood in this country cannot be trusted. Public statements to this effect have appeared in the press only recently.

Furthermore, in the opinion of the evacuees the Government may not be excused for not having attempted to distinguish between the loyal and the disloyal in carrying out the evacuation.

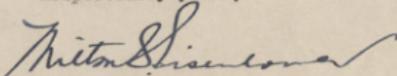
Under such circumstances it would be amazing if extreme bitterness did not develop.

The War Relocation Authority in developing its program must choose, as I see it, between emphasizing one of two plans. One is to build permanent relocation centers in which all evacuees may live and work for a small wage during the war. (The present wage is \$16.00 a month.) The second alternative is to strike out vigorously in helping the loyal become reabsorbed in normal American communities during the war period.

The War Relocation Authority has chosen to place major emphasis on the second alternative, in the hope that when the war is over only those people will be living in centers whose loyalty may be in doubt or who because of age or other reasons are unable to reestablish themselves. It is felt that, particularly for the citizen group, their place in America must be earned during this war period, that it will be unsafe to wait until the war is over to attempt to reestablish them because acceptance by the American public cannot be expected after the war if they are denied the privilege of serving their country now. The director of the Authority is striving to avoid, if possible, creation of a racial minority problem after the war which might result in something akin to Indian reservations. It is for these reasons primarily, I think, that he advocates the maximum individual relocation as against the maintenance of all ten relocation centers.

Dillon Myer has now been Director of the War Relocation Authority for nearly a year. He would benefit enormously from consultation with you. May I express the hope that you will have an opportunity to see him in the near future?

Respectfully yours,



M. S. Eisenhower
Associate Director