

1944
MAR 8 1944

MEMORANDUM TO THE UNDER SECRETARY

**Subject: Appointment of a panel of lawyers
to review WRA leave clearance pro-
cedures.**

Dear Mr. Fortas:

You asked me on the telephone yesterday about the advisability of having the Secretary appoint a panel of lawyers to review the leave clearance procedures of the War Relocation Authority. I believe that under present circumstances such a panel might be helpful to the Secretary and if properly handled it could be beneficial to the leave clearance program.

At two previous times in the history of the Authority we have considered the advisability of selecting a panel of prominent people outside the Government to review our leave clearance procedures and to make recommendations concerning their administration. On both occasions we rejected the idea, primarily for three reasons: (1) We felt that the danger of securing unsympathetic persons, or persons who would not be able to take the time adequately to understand the problems involved, was greater than the advantage to be gained from such a plan, (2) we were convinced that the proposal would not really serve to protect and strengthen the leave clearance program because the critics of that program were not genuinely convinced that it was inadequate, but were attacking leave clearance as a means of discrediting the entire relocation program, and (3) the final responsibility would rest with the War Relocation Authority in any case.

We felt, moreover, that if a panel of persons from outside the Government should bring in a report favorable to our present procedures, the public would probably regard such a report as being merely a "whitewash", with the result that the plan would not achieve its purpose. A panel selected by the Secretary would probably be received in a different light.

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In short, I feel that a procedure which would not have been particularly helpful to the War Relocation Authority acting individually, can be helpful to the Secretary of the Interior and, thus, to the program of the Authority at the present time. It is of the utmost importance, however, that the panel be selected with great care. The men selected need to be of national reputation and known for their fairness, competence, and integrity; but, more than that, they should have a reasonably liberal attitude toward civil liberty questions and should be free of racial prejudice.

Sincerely,

D. J. Myer
Director



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