

Memorandum, Dillon S. Myer to the Secretary of the Interior, May 10, 1944. Papers of Dillon S. Myer.

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MAY 10 1944

MEMORANDUM for the Secretary

SUBJECT: Revocation of military orders excluding Japanese Americans from Pacific Coast areas

This memorandum contains recommendations of the War Relocation Authority as to the steps which should be taken in announcing and effectuating the revocation of the Pacific Coast military orders affecting Japanese Americans.

1. On May 20, 1944, we propose that the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command issue an order having the effect of revoking previous orders excluding persons of Japanese descent, such revocation to be effective as to all persons of Japanese descent who have not been denied leave clearance by the War Relocation Authority. The revocation should have the effect of opening all of the present exclusion areas in the States of Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona and Alaska, except possibly limited strategic industrial and military installations around which public movement is already restricted.

2. On the date the revocation order is effective, we suggest that the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command hold a meeting of the leading publishers, business, labor and agricultural leaders, college presidents, and key political figures in the affected states, for the purpose of announcing the change in policy and calling upon such leaders for assistance and support.

3. Simultaneously, we propose that the Secretary of War call a meeting of the Pacific Coast congressional delegation in Washington for the purpose of making a similar announcement.

4. On Monday, May 22, we propose that the Attorney General issue a statement setting forth the legal effect of revocation of the exclusion orders, describing that portion of the Japanese American population which would then be free to enter the coastal area, and calling attention to those classes of persons of Japanese descent who will remain in custody either at Tule Lake Center or in internment camps. If reaction to the announcements made on May 20 appears to require it, the Attorney General should also make appropriate reference in his statement to the importance of protecting civil rights and to the attitude of the Federal government toward protection of such rights.


5. Also on Monday, May 22, we propose that the Secretary of the Interior issue a statement outlining the effect of revocation on the program of the War Relocation Authority, calling attention to the fact that, as a result, the Authority is to be liquidated during fiscal year 1945, that the Tule Lake Center is to be transferred to the Department of Justice on July 1, 1944, and that emphasis throughout the remainder of the work of the War Relocation Authority will be upon relocation of all loyal evacuees, either by return to their homes in the coastal area, or by re-settlement elsewhere.

6. Immediately following revocation of the exclusion orders, we suggest that the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command formally notify the Governors of the four affected states in writing and call upon them for cooperation.

Cooperation of the War Department and the Federal Security Agency in the two extremely important respects mentioned below appears to be essential to the successful conduct of a relocation program by the War Relocation Authority after announcement of revocation of the exclusion orders and to an orderly liquidation of the Authority.

The War Department should take full public responsibility for protecting the right of loyal evacuees to return to the evacuated area if they wish to do so. We feel strongly that if the War Department will support the return of the evacuees by formal public announcement, by the assignment of a picked group of especially competent and well-informed officers to work in the coastal area with the local committees interested in handling the return of evacuees in an orderly and democratic manner and with the War Relocation Authority, and by seeing that all officers concerned with contacts with the civilian population are properly oriented toward the problems involved in the return of evacuees, revocation of the orders will have no serious adverse effect in the coastal area.

It is probable that a substantial number of evacuees, having been taken away from normal sources of livelihood, having been maintained for two years or more at a subsistence level, and being faced now with the necessity of making a fresh start on their own responsibilities, will be unable and unwilling, because of age, illness, family responsibility, etc., to leave the centers, even to return to their former places of residence, unless they are given reasonable assurance of public assistance through welfare channels if they need it. Some will have to leave the centers under a definite immediate public assistance arrangement. Public assistance in these cases should be provided through appropriate state agencies under the direction and with the assistance of the Federal Security Agency. Liquidation of the War Relocation Authority will be difficult at best, but it will be impossible without a public assistance program handled by the Federal Security Agency.



We are in process of preparing a comprehensive outline of the program proposed in this memorandum, together with drafts of all proposed announcements, orders, letters, etc. We are prepared to present a detailed plan not only for a revision of the War Relocation Authority program, but for the action to be taken by the cooperating agencies whose responsibilities have been touched upon in this outline, and by other agencies, such as the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, War Security Administration, and other organizations which should play a part in relocating and reestablishing the evacuee population.

*D.S. Meyer*

Director ✓



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