

C O P Y

JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

May 25th 1942

The Hon. Chas. A. Sprague,
Governor of Oregon
Salem, Oregon

Dear Sir:

Realizing the misunderstanding that may come from the small number of evacuees that have volunteered to go to the sugar beet fields in Eastern Oregon to assist in the thinning work, I am writing to you, giving you some of the reactions of the evacuees on this subject matter.

I have been keeping in touch with the subject matter, through Mr. Mamaro Wakasugi, formerly of Banks, Oregon. You will recall that he had audiences with you pertaining to the matter of the Japanese farmers in Oregon. He is now located in Weiser, Idaho. The staff here were unable to make a trip to Idaho and Oregon, so we requested recommendations from him.

Mr. Wakasugi has recommended the Oregon set-up to the evacuees in the Portland Assembly Center, and I believe from my telephone conversation with the Assembly Center that the original few that went to Eastern Oregon had reported back to Portland the conditions as found back there.

I believe it is too much to expect the evacuees to jump at the opportunity of working in the sugar beet fields, when you consider that the very area from which the request comes now, only a few weeks ago made the statement to your office that they would take vigilante action if the Japanese were allowed to go into Malheur County. Reassurance is not sufficient, there must be absolute guarantee of the provisions of the agreement with the employers. I have the utmost confidence in the people of Oregon on this subject matter.

Most of the farmers in Oregon are operators, so that there are not many people that we could classify as itinerant laborers. I believe that if the request for workers had gone to some of the California Assembly Centers, better results would have been obtained.

I am reluctant to make recommendations in regards to Idaho, because of the divergent statements made by Governor Clark. In the Boise Capital News of May 23rd, the Governor states, "finest treatment" if they come to Idaho. The same Governor at Grangeville, Idaho, bitterly denounced the Japanese as people who "act like rats" and that the solution to the Japanese problem in Idaho and the nation would be to "send them all back to Japan and then sink the island".

Such divergent statements from the Governor of Idaho are surely not reassuring of his desire or ability to give protection to the Voluntary Work Corps, if they should go to Idaho. When a man can make two such statements on the same day, it is difficult for me to say that the Evacuees should go to Idaho to help in the sugar beet thinning.

The Hon. Chas. A. Sprague

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I sincerely hope that the evacuees in Portland Assembly Center will take advantage of the Oregon set-up, so that those who go to Eastern Oregon can not only assist in the war effort, but give them an opportunity to show the Caucasian American citizens that they are not the devils that they are pictured to be. Perhaps, a condition whereby they may be permitted to stay there may emanate from their aid to the sugar beet growers at this time.

I hope that this information will be of some assistance to you in understanding the evacuees side of the picture.

Yours very truly,

Signed Hito Okada
National Treasurer

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