



EXHIBIT II

HISTORY OF THE TEMPORARY COMMUNITY COUNCIL POSTON, ARIZONA

**Written by: Dr. T. G. Ishimaru, Former Chairman Temporary Community Council at
request of T. H. Haas, Project Attorney November, 1942**

**The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley**

History repeats that warfare brings about unpleasant and abnormal conditions and life to the people who are directly involved. Evacuation to the Japanese people was a bitter experience—it was a wholesale movement of all Japanese regardless of citizenship within a limited time and accomplished with the minimum of trouble into these ten relocation centers. Each center was ready to accommodate 10,000 people or more as a temporary home for an indefinite period. It is without question, that the people who were evacuated in the early part of the movement accepted and endured the brunt of the hardships as; rationed food, bad housing, dust, wind and heat. People of Poston will never forget their first days of center life. In the same token, much credit goes to the Administrators who were ready to co-operate and understand the difficult situation as faced by these people. To them also, this was a new life and many were here to share this life with the Japanese residents.

Some of these relocation projects ranked third and fourth in population in some of the states and no community of this size can be governed without some form of government. Circulars were issued by the War Relocation Authority, that the residents of the projects should be given the opportunity to govern themselves.

Poston was one of the first projects to go ahead in establishing a self-government. Each Block resident over the age of 18 years were given the right to vote for their representative who was a citizen, to form the Temporary Community Council of Poston. The Council was to be the Legislative body of the project.

On July 21, 1942 elections were held in each Block of Unit I (except 5 Blocks, which were comparatively new) and on the following day these Councilmen were to be inducted into office at the Pioneer Grove. Unfortunately, on the evening of this induction, the formalities were stormed-out by the wind, dust and showers of this desert country. On July 24th, the formalities were re-opened at one of the mess halls. At which time 31 new Councilmen were sworn into office and the election of officers followed; creating the offices of Chairman, Secretary and Sergeant-at-arms. The officers were as follows: Dr. T. G. Ishimaru, Mr. Hidemi Ogawa, Mrs. Mary Tachibane, and Mr. Frank Kuwahara respectively.

A subsequent election on September 1, 1942 increased the number of Councilmen to 36 members accounting for all Blocks in Unit I. Each Councilman was given a questionnaire to state his age, educational background and preference of committees. As a result, average age of the Councilmen was approximately 29.8 years, the majority had college, university or professional school education. By choice these Councilmen were placed

into the many committees, to actively solve many of the immediate problems of the community. They were as follows: Education, Law and Order, Social Welfare, Public Relations, Community Activities, Public Health, Food, Housing, Work Projects, Community Enterprise, and Building and Landscape.

The functions of the committees were to check and investigate each respective department for the information desired and report to the council members as to their findings. Some difficulties were encountered, but on the whole each committee was accorded full co-operation in carrying out their function. That such inquiries were constructive steps in advising the public the actual interest and responsibilities of the Administrative officers. With the forming of the Council body, one of the first committees to be assigned its duty was the Law and Order Committee to draw up the Code of Offenses of Poston, which was submitted to the War Relocation Authority officials, in the early part of August, 1942 and accepted with slight revisions.

Since the members of the Temporary Community Council were ordered by the War Relocation directives that they must be citizens, the Poston Temporary Community Council developed a plan to have Isseis participate in the political life of the project. Issei representatives from each Block were elected by Isseis themselves and formed an Advisory Board to the Council. The Council took this stand in view of the fact that the Issei were older and more experienced in the way of life of the Japanese people, and thought that psychologically as well as practically they could contribute much to the functions of the Community Council in their deliberations upon each subject matter that was taken up at their meetings. This was considered a satisfactory move to give the Issei some form of recognition. To offset their argument, that there was no difference between a citizen or an Alien Japanese after being put into such a relocation project. Subsequent War Relocation Authority instructions have changed the qualifications as to the status of membership in the Community Council.

Within a period of a month, Temporary Community Councils in Unit II and Unit III were established to form their separate councils to operate within their own units.

It can be said that these councilmen contributed much of their time and energy to the duties they were requested to perform and as a result, much progress was made to satisfy the suspicions and animosities of the residents. The Council was a "Complaint Department" of the project at first, but gradually were able to work into the unregulated and misconceived departments to straighten out the misunderstandings and misinformations as circulated around the project. To foster good public relationship, the Council members and the Block Managers went cotton picking in Parker Valley last fall, to help the farmers who were desperately in need of workers to harvest their essential crop.

The saddest experience of the Temporary Community Council was the resignation in body, during the Poston incident (November 1942) under unwieldy pressure by an over-zealous mob. (The Chairman was away on a trip to Salt Lake City, Utha) Therefore for an approximate period of three months the project did not have a Council, but this was overcome as the trouble settled and another election was held. During the incumbency of the original Community Council, plans were in force to create a Permanent Community Council, and the members to this committee were known as the Permanent Organization Commission, with representatives from all three units appointed by the Project Director.

On the whole there has been very little criticism from the Council standpoint, if any it has been minor judging from the overall picture, but to cite a few cases: The slow action on the Council memorandums to the project administrators, but this can be well reconciled from the fact that these men were very busy. And the writer has seen action taken without a reply to the Council recommendations. The grave mistake in employing certain individuals, incompetent or unqualified to handle the important position they held. Better screening process would have avoided trouble. For example, the case of one man, who was relieved of his position here, given another job in another relocation center, only to make trouble publicly thru the press. The promises of stoves and linoleum were far from appearance for a long time, only to put the project director "on the spot." The housing situation was terrible with overcrowded apartments of 2 and 4 families. What made it worse was

the unavailability of partition material which definitely showed lack of privacy. Finally, the school building situation was absolutely shameful. Adobe, may have been the essential material for such school buildings in this desert country, but they were not completed the first year. So the next step was to use the recreation halls in the many Blocks, which scattered the school students all over the project without any central spot. Unit II and III were more fortunate that they were not overcrowded, so were able to use one complete Block for schools. Officials in the War Relocation Authority office in Washington, can not appreciate the life of Poston other than reading the many reports which were written. That psychologically they did not understand the Japanese has been their handicap—thinking purely in the American mind is difficult in more ways than one. The point of practicability, why did not the War Relocation Authority consider the hiring of evacuee help under Civil Service rating—there are many capable men and women who can qualify. Doctors in the hospital deserve better consideration than given, and as we see the present relocation program, it is just depleting the staff and replacement is almost impossible because of the drain on professional men for the war effort. It is difficult to reconcile a \$5600 Medical Director versus a \$19.00 Evacuee Doctor. In ability the latter may be more experienced in certain specialized fields. This gap is too great and since the Evacuee Doctor has been with the people from the beginning he is better qualified to handle most of the cases. As the doctors leave it will become serious as far as medical care is concerned. It has been a very difficult experience on the part of the Administrators to administer this new type of program with the Poston Project situated many miles from any large community, in the desert country of an Indian Reservation. Handicaps were many, but gradually these shortcomings were filled with possibilities of improvements. In conclusion, the Project Administrators are to be commended for their friendliness, sincerity and wholesome attitude toward the residents, to carry out their responsibilities to the highest level possible that has made Poston one of the best War Relocation Projects. Administrators as Mr. W. Wade, Project Director; Mr. Ralph M. Gelvin, Associate Director; Mr. Len L. Nelson, Unit I Director; Mr. James D. Crawford, Unit II Director; Mr. Moris Burge, Unit III Director; Mr. Ted H. Haas, Project Attorney; Dr. John Powell, Chief Community Management; Mr. A. W. Empie, Chief Fiscal Administrator; Dr. A. Leighton and Dr. E. Spicer, Bureau Sociological Research; Mr. Vernon Kennedy and Mr. Giles Zimmerman, Chief Employment and Leave Officers and a few others deserve honor and respect for their keen participation in their respective departments and the interest they have manifested from the inception of this project. Without such understanding men, this project may have been a failure with everlasting changes, which eventually would bring about a break down of morale and possible inconsistency of policies. There is an old saying “Weary not of well doing” which personifies the calibre of these men and may they continue on to greater heights.

At the inception of the Temporary Community Council, there were clamors for equal rights by the Isseis to serve on the Community Council. The reason being that there was no difference in status between the citizen and enemy alien in these projects. That the distinction was very vague because all the people of Japanese ancestry were put into these relocation projects. The writer believes that Gila Relocation project and a few others were the first to protest this standard.

Poston overcame this feeling by electing an Advisory Board (members elected from each Block) to the Temporary Community Council.

Subsequent official W. R. A. instructions changed the qualifications and gave equal rights to citizens as well as Isseis.

The writer has seen both councils under operation and he feels that regardless of what the feelings of the Issei may be—there should be a demarcation of rights. And the present setup is not feasible or practical because the majority of the Issei councilmen do not understand the English language thoroughly, they do not have the educational background to be the leaders of such an important group. Many never had organization training or background other than serving in small associations or clubs where one was chosen as officer not on ability but on his financial capacity to contribute funds when the coffers were low or to satisfy his own “ego” thinking

he was a leader—petty politics.

The criticism the writer makes is that these Isseis lack qualifications—they are comparatively small men, narrow thinking type, selfish with scheming interest. Many have been elected in their respective Blocks because of their “loud yelling” and vociferous attitude rather than on ability because the thinking individuals have declined to accept the position. The cream of the thinking and understanding people are on the outside looking in.

That these Isseis are enemy aliens and are susceptible to Federal Intelligence Service surveillance which is not a healthy sign to be in such a group where one is open for attack on whatever he may say.

That the wisest and ideal move on the part of the Issei would be to sit tight and utilize Nisei talent, education and background of American Institutions because many have college and university education. And lastly they are citizens of the United States.

Politically the Isseis are very jealous and narrow, clamoring for power and rights which is not legally theirs. The rumors that fly around these projects are spread by these men who do not understand nor can interpret the information and are considered leaders—the people are dumb enough to believe them. The smart Isseis who refrain from participation are saying “why mingle with those bunch of dumb clucks!”

Seeing both types of councils function the writer is in favor of returning to the original plan where by the citizens are participants in the Community Council. Unfortunate as it may be the Issei is an enemy alien, and why should he be given equal right as with citizens!

Let us conduct these meetings in the English language. because we are on government property. Let the non-English speaking Issei meet by themselves and bring their troubles to the Community Council in advisory capacity.

Let us make the Nisei government conscious, that there is a responsibility on their shoulders to make them better citizens, to make them understand American Institutions which is theirs as long as they live in this country. In one respect this is an Americanization program.

If and when these relocations projects are totally nil of Niseis, then another program is in order.