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## [Embree's notes on net project at Poston]

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### Note on the Net Project at Poston

CR-Industry

A member of the staff at Poston who is in Washington for a few days reports a bad situation arising in regard to the camouflage net project in Poston.

The project is just being opened and a call has gone out for 900 men to work on it at the WRA rate of \$16 a month.

The call is not being answered. The most important reason for this is that there is a labor shortage within Poston due to the number of men who have left to pick sugar beets. Two important incentives used in calling men to work on sugar beets are: (a) Patriotic - i.e. it is necessary to pick these beets because they are necessary to the American war effort. (b) Financial. Workers in the sugar beet fields are paid prevailing wages.

Now while work in the camouflage net factory is also supposed to be of a patriotic nature, there is a feeling in Poston that the people are being exploited when asked to work on nets for only \$16 a month. It is, after all, an outside industry, not a community enterprise. Work in the net project, in the eyes of the community (and of the Community Council) does not help civic life in Poston as does, say, work on the staff of the school, or the agricultural project or the mess halls. Furthermore, to get 900 men at present in Poston would mean taking men away from Poston jobs such as mess halls which are essential to community welfare.

On the whole the Community Council is opposed to pressures being exerted to suddenly put 900 men on the net project now with the existing labor shortage due to men away harvesting sugar beets. Furthermore, the Poston administration tends to side with the Community Council.

The present situation is a critical one and can lead to a lot of bad blood. For instance, recently a U.S.E.D. truck brought up a load of net materials and there was no one on hand to unload it. Some evacuees and others were discussing the situation when the Army truck driver walked up to one of the evacuees (a good American who was already employed on a Poston job) and, pointing to him, said threateningly, "This is sabotage" and went on to say that if evacuees didn't turn out voluntarily to work on net projects, the Army would force them to do so. This incident sent a wave of indignation over the evacuees since it carried both a false accusation and a threat based on it.

This situation calls for some definite decisions soon. And these decisions involve important issues.

1. Whether evacuees are to work on non-community projects for \$16 a month while other evacuees go off the project to earn prevailing wages. (In the above situation, both jobs are "war" jobs.)
2. Whether the Army does or does not have authority within a WRA project.
3. Whether it is wise to start any industrial project in a center on such a large scale as to require 900 employees (and in this case 900 male citizens) which means a high percent from a special group.
4. Whether outside work or inside work is to have precedence. This involves the whole WRA relocation program of gradually reducing the population of the centers which in turn involves the question of

whether we wish to set up permanent Japanese reservations in America, or whether we wish to reabsorb Japanese Americans into American life as an asset rather than a liability.

John F. Embree  
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