



[Special meeting of rep's Unit I, II, III re: net factory project]

October 19, 1942

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Unit I, Ad Bldg. #3
Two Thirty P. M.

SPECIAL MEETING

A special meeting of the Labor representatives from Units I, II, and III was held in the Conference Room at Unit I at two thirty o'clock Saturday, December 21, 1942. The meeting was opened with the election of Harvey Iwata of Unit III as chairman for the meeting, and Frank Kuwahara as vice-chairman.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the camouflage factory and find ways and means to present the important facts and arguments to the residents of Poston.

Mr. F. Kuwahara, chairman of the Temporary Council of Unit informed the group that the Temporary Council of Unit I had been set up and was recognized, and that they were now ready to proceed with the other two units on the net factory.

It was urged by the chairman that every member present bring up any questions, suggestions, or proposals pertinent to the camouflage factory.

It was the opinion of Mr. Kuwahara that there was no other recourse to take than to accept the factory, and the important thing was to take back the facts and the arguments concerning it and make the people understand the why and wherefores of accepting the factory and what it would mean to the community. Also, when presenting these facts, it was emphasized that just one interpretation be presented.

Mr. Kennedy present at the meeting stated that ever since the buildings went up for the factory, sooner or later, it was to be opened for employment. For a long time, it was assumed that it would open at W.R.A. prevailing wages, \$12.00, \$16.00 or \$19.00. A great deal of discussion was held to decide whether this was a fair proposition or not; and possibly due to the great extent of the people's dissatisfaction in regard to the wages, letters were written to Washington protesting the proposition.

Thus, arrangements were made whereby the engineers would sub-contract the camouflage factory and outside prevailing wages would be paid. Mr. Kennedy reminded the group of Mr. Stancliffe's speech in regard to the prevailing wage and whether this was the true prevailing wage.

The main thing which was pointed out was whether the three units would accept the camouflage project and if so, under what general terms of distribution of the earnings. Mr. Kennedy's main interest was whether or not the wage scale was the subject to negotiate.

A teletyped telegram was read to the group in answer to the telegram which Mr. Kennedy had sent through to the United States Engineers which reads: "Retal of December 16, wage which was requested

Contract is confidential and result of the earnings of the contract be renegotiated. Contractor's profit controlled by the United States. Contractor can pay net workers no more and no less than 48¢ per 100 sq. ft. Refer CE

Signed, Putnam.

It was stated by Mr. Kennedy that the \$1.00 and \$1.25 per hour which was rumored to be prevailing wages on the outside was paid only to mechanic and workers in the building trades and possibly in the metal trade. However, a great majority of the American workers have not achieved the \$1.00 per hour wages. It was mentioned that in the textile trade in the deep south, only 45¢ per hour was being paid to the workers, and in the canvas and bag industry in Los Angeles 65¢ per hour was the highest amount paid. Therefore, it was assumed that the 60¢ per hour to be paid to net workers was prevailing wages.

Mr. S. Sato of Unit II stated that looking at it from the economic angle, he believe it would be the right thing to accept the trust fund and the factory project as it would mean an increase of money coming in from the outside.

There followed a discussion on whether 1000 sq. ft. per day was possible to weave. Mr. Kennedy stated that gathering the information he had from net workers around the camp, it was possible after two or three weeks of practice and experience, a net weaver could make his quota of 1000 sq. ft. or \$4.80 per day. It was brought to the attention of the members present that the weavers in Santa Anita had been paid under W.R.A. wage scale, and therefore, no comparison could be made.

Mr. Kennedy however indicated that the group go on assumption that 1000 sq. ft. could be weaved, and if 1500 sq. ft. per day could be obtained as many experienced workers had stated, the wage scale would go quite high. There was one thing that the contractor would like to know before work actually begins, and that was which plan is adopted by the evacuees.

Following are the three plans which were suggested by the W.R.A.

1. Worker receive all of the earnings, less \$25.00 a month for subsistence which the contractor will pay to the project for board and room of the worker.
2. The Trust Fund idea in which the worker a will receive wage scale of \$16.00 or \$19.00 a month, plus whatever cash advance he would draw from the project and the balance turned over the Trust Fund.
3. Worker will receive \$16.00 or \$19.00 plus cash clothing allowance, plus certain bonus based on production over and above 1000 sq. ft. plus another bonus of 0.001 per sq. ft. for all production in excess of an average of 1000 sq. ft.

However, Mr. Kennedy stated that it was important that a decision be reached in regard to accepting this project for two reasons:

1. The factory will not be ready to operate for another 15-20 days until it is completed, and the engineers will not go ahead with the work until a decision is reached.
2. Possibility that someone may suddenly decide to take the whole business out of camp and not to set up factory at all.

Mr. Kennedy offered suggestions as to how the trust fund might use the money working on the assumption that the Trust Fund is a dopted.

1. A simple distribution of the Trust Fund was to put the earnings into a pot and every worker share equally. This plan would work out if each worker averages 1000 sq. ft. per day, and the memebra of the work corps would receive approximately \$7.50 per month bonus.
If the workers average 1500 sq. ft. per day, a bonus of about \$11.30 or \$11.60 for every worker. However, if the factory operates in two shifts, the bonus will be twice as much, and if in three shifts,

the bonus of course will be three times as much.

No objection to sharing the Trust Fund, but the workers might protest to sharing it with the person who is only a messenger for example whose duties are simple and effortless. It was suggested that the distribution be made proportionately from the professional group down, or in round figures about \$15.00 to doctors and lawyers etc. to about \$2.00 to messengers.

2. Another suggestion was that instead of dividing the entire trust fund, about 75% of the Trust Fund be cash and the balance be used for community purposes such as general block fund of \$100. to \$200. each; building athletic fields, library, etc.
3. With the new Relocation program of resettling on the outside, many of the residents would not be financially able to go out—to set up a welfare fund from which the people could borrow from it and pay it back when they are settled on the outside.

The question of the clothing allowance deduction was brought up.

This point was clarified by Mr. Kennedy that regardless of the size of the family, \$25.00 would be deducted for subsistence from each individual who worked in the plant, and each member of the family would receive his clothing allowance from the trust fund according to the amount specified in the instruction Sheet 27. After all the necessary deductions are made, the balance would be turned over to the trust fund.

Another question which was asked was whether the trust funds were set up in other Relocation Centers. Mr. Kennedy stated that at Tulalake, a tent factory was started with W.R.A. wages paid to the workers. Due to the dissatisfaction brought about by these wages, the factory was leased to a large tent manufacturer who was now paying prevailing wages. At the Gila River Relocation Center, the camouflage factory had been accepted by the evacuees although final negotiations had not yet been made. The third plan was said to be adopted by the workers with a few modifications to be made. However, at the Colorado Relocation Center, there were no outside projects for the people to work in, although there were many jobs such as shoveling gravel, etc. which was open to the evacuees at prevailing wages.

Mr. George Ono representing the Fair Practice Board of Unit II stated that this camouflage project was the concern of both the older and younger generation, and without the full approval and understanding of the elder people, it would make it difficult for the younger generation to accept the factory. Another important point which was brought out by Mr. Ono was the voting to decide on the acceptance or rejection of the net plant. He proposed that the total blocks of the three camps put their ballots into one pot without designating the block number. This would eliminate discrimination among the three camps as to who is unpatriotic.

Discussion on the method of voting and in what manner the whole set up should be handled was held.

Sam Fujita of Unit III moved that the three camps take a vote on whether to accept or reject the factory, entitling every resident 14 years and over to vote; that the voting be conducted through secret balloting and put into a sealed box in their respective blocks, that the counting of the ballots be left up to the central committee consisting of members from the three units. The motion was seconded by Mr. Takashima of Unit III and unanimously passed by the members present.

The question was asked whether aliens could be permitted to work. The answer was that at the Geneva conference, it was decided that aliens confined in a country during the time of war will not be permitted to work in machinery of war. Whether camouflage is an instrument of war is questionable, however, for the sake of argument it is considered so. Thus, only citizens are permitted to work in the factory.

Another question which arose in the minds of the members present was whether the distribution of the Trust Fund should be decided upon at the same time the vote was taken in regard to accepting the project, and who should vote to decide on the distribution.

Mr. Karl Taku of Unit III moved that a ballot system whereby non-members of the work corps would receive one vote and a member of the work corps would receive two ballots to cast. The notion was seconded by Yoshio Abe of Unit II and unanimously carried.

The details of the plan would be worked out by the bargaining committee after the two questions were decided upon, and up to this committee to make satisfactory arrangements with the contractor before the work actually began.

Through investigation by various members present, it was reported that weaving 1000 sq. ft. was possible in a day's work although it was necessary to get two or three weeks of practice and experience. It was brought out that until the worker became accustomed to the work, the average of nets weaved would be small and the danger of the worker going into debt rather than making any profit. This was clarified by Mr. Kennedy with a statement that there was a law which guaranteed the worker a minimum wage of 40¢ per hour and he felt that this factory came under its jurisdiction, irrespective of the contract. However, he stated he had written to Washington to verify this statement.

It was the advice of Mr. Kennedy that the people accept the contract for 60 days and at the end of 60 days, it was up for renewal or rejection. If it was renewed, the wage scale and working conditions could be altered to suit the people's demand.

As to the compensation and insurance laws of Arizona, it was reported that they were exactly the same as those in California. If in case the worker should become injured on the first or second day, compensation would be figured on the actual earnings of the worker.

Mr. George Furuta of Unit III proposed that a mimeographed sheet be printed both in Japanese and English stating in outline form the facts and figures about the factory. It was suggested that they be brought before the Council for approval before presenting it to the blocks for vote. The form to be printed was to contain enough facts but not advisable to go into the minutest detail.

Also proposed by Mr. Furuta was a selection of the three labor chairmen from the three units to meet together with Mr. Kennedy and plan such a sheet. Wednesday morning at nine thirty at Unit I was decided by the group.

The meeting was adjourned by the chairman at five o'clock.