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JAPANESE WELFARE under the BRITISH COLUMBIA SECURITY COMMISSION

The removal of some 23,000 individuals of the Japanese race from the Defence Area of British Columbia was the task with which the Federal Government was faced a year ago. The Coast Defence Area in British Columbia, bounded by the Yukon on the North and the United States on the South, extends from the Pacific to the Cascades and measures more than 75,000 square miles.

The action was swift and dramatic. The first step was to place those who were deemed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to be dangerous in Internment Camps. Road Camps under the Department of Mines & Resources were established to provide a means of livelihood for the majority of the men whose families later were evacuated. Early in January a special committee was appointed to dispose of the Japanese Fishing vessels in an equitable way. A month later all weapons, automobiles, cameras and radios owned by the Japanese were surrendered. All of these latter, except the weapons, are now held in trust by the Custodian of Enemy Property, a branch of the Department of the Secretary of State, with whom it is obligatory for all Japanese Nationals to register their property.

In March 1942, a Commission was appointed to control the mass evacuation of all persons of Japanese parentage from the coastal zones. A clearing station was established at Hastings Park in Vancouver and in a remarkable short time it offered shelter to thousands of people, moved from distant and near-by rural areas in the Defence Area. Many stayed there for weeks until facilities for their more permanent care could be arranged in the interior.

The evacuation was completed by October 31st., approximately seven months after the appointment of the Commission. Eleven thousand Japanese are now residing in seven centres in the interior of British Columbia, and the remaining twelve thousand are accounted for in a number of ways. Alberta and Manitoba sugar beet industry has claimed a good many of the latter, and the lumber camps in Ontario others. Many girls have been placed in domestic jobs in the East, and some of the young Canadian born are obtaining jobs through their own efforts. Still another fairly large group are able to support themselves either in normal industry or because of ample private means.

While these people are under the protection and control of the British Columbia Security Commission, our concern as social workers has been particularly with the 11,000 individuals in the British Columbia interior centres.

It was early recognized by Commission officials, that social workers would be needed in helping to handle the difficult adjustments the people were having to make. The task of organizing Welfare offices and selecting staff for each of the towns took the first three months of the Field Supervisor's time, and thereafter many weeks to co-ordinate the work and assemble material for policy making. Close supervision was given in this period to the work of the Welfare Managers, some of whom are trained social workers, and some not, who were placed in charge of the Welfare offices. They in turn supervised a small group of Canadian born Japanese young people, whose education and interests prove them not only good Canadians, but also anxious and willing to do a good job of work for their own people in distress. The insight and application of this young group has been most remarkable, and the story of their work should form a separate study.

The Welfare office is an integral part of the general Commission office, and, in each centre, comes under the direct jurisdiction of the Town Supervisor. Problems related to maintenance giving, budgetting of income, clothing needs, family adjustments with respect to housing, child welfare, group work and practically the whole gamut of social problems in concentrated form, are delegated to the Welfare Department. The actual case work is done by the Japanese workers - only one of whom is a trained social worker - closely supervised by the Welfare Managers. Problems requiring definite policy soon became evident, and these were referred on to the General Supervisor of Welfare at headquarters in Vancouver.

The setting of policy has been one of the most interesting and difficult phases of the work. The premise upon which it was our purpose to work was that the policies of the Provincial and Municipal Governments in the areas affected should apply in every detail to the Japanese problem.

TO Karen Hill, M.S.W.

FROM: Amy Leigh

1923-27 Probation Officer for girls. There was also a P.O. for) Burnaby
boys. Set up and operated a Social Service Exchange.) Municipality.

1927-1929 School of Social Work, Toronto.

1929-1931 Caseworker, City Social Dept., Vancouver. Relief was given in
kind. A "grocery store" in the basement, supplied basic foods,
but too many dried peas, beans and such. Meat was given most
sparingly. For the most part it was a mechanical procedure; visit-
ing the homes was infrequent with little time to assess the real
problems. However, the grocery store was closed and scrip given.
Unfortunately, there was a scandal of sorts in the department, and
it would be some time before thought could be given to improving
services. *Their first professional Social Worker.*

1931-1936 Supervisor, Western Division (B.C. and Alberta) C.N.I.B.
A survey was made of all blind people in the Province. Services
were extended wherever possible - home teaching, library, emergency
and supplementary relief. *Their first professional Social Worker.*

Services in Alberta were limited. A Director and one home teacher
in Calgary. A second office was set up in Edmonton, and staff
increased.

1937-1943 Director of Welfare, Vancouver City Social Service Dept.
A survey of the Department had just been completed, and many re-
commendations made.
Financial assistance had always been a provincial responsibility,
but as the depression deepened the Federal Government made grants
to the provinces for unemployment relief. In the meantime a few
municipalities, unable to carry the burden, were in the Receivers
hands.
The local office was the scene of many disturbances. One day all
employees were locked in their offices while the RCMP dealt with a
major uprising. We believed that the time had come for decentralization
to relieve the pressure in the central office.

An office was opened in the downtown area for the unemployed, and
welfare offices were opened in north, south, east and west areas
of the city. The south Vancouver office became an experimental
centre. The Provincial Department provided office space, furniture,
and a Supervisor. An area with 1000 recipients was chosen for the
experiment. Ten social workers carried 100 cases each. In five
months the case load was reduced to 523, due largely to better case-
load management and more frequent visits.

From 1939-1942 the unemployment case loads were considerably reduced
due to enlistment in the Armed Forces. A sad commentary on our
civilization that a war took us out of the depression.

1942

Japanese Resettlement: I was seconded to the B.C. Security Commission to set up social services at Hastings Park, and in the areas to which the Japanese were to be sent.

During the War Emergency some 23,000 Japanese were removed from the Defence Area of B.C., which covered more than 75,000 square miles. A clearing station was established at Hastings Park, and during the first few months 12,000 Japanese were accommodated in a number of ways. Alberta and Manitoba Sugar Beet Industries claimed many, and others went to lumber camps in Ontario. A number of girls were placed in domestic jobs in the East, and some of the young Canadian-born found jobs through their own efforts. Another fairly large ^{number} were able to support themselves.

The remaining 11,000 were settled in seven centres in the interior of B.C. The task of organizing Welfare Offices and selecting staff took much of the Field Supervisor's time, and thereafter many weeks to co-ordinate the work and assemble material for policy making. During this period the work of the local staff was supervised, some of whom were trained social workers and some not trained. They in turn supervised a small group of Canadian-born Japanese young people, whose education and interests proved them not only good Canadians, but also anxious and willing to do a good job of work for their own people in distress. Schools were available in three of the areas.

Problems related to maintenance, budgetting, clothing needs, family adjustments with respect to housing, child welfare, group work, and practically the whole gamut of social problems in concentrated form, were delegated to the Welfare Department. The setting of policy was one of the most interesting and difficult phases of the work. We believed the policies of our provincial and municipal governments in the areas, should apply in every detail to the Japanese. However, many situations arose which had no counterpart in the experience of any of our public or private agencies.

The Federal Departments involved in the total problem were - Labour, External Affairs, Mines and Resources, Justice, Finance and the Secretary of State.

All members of the Commission staff who worked closely with the Japanese made many friends amongst them, some of whom kept in touch long after the emergency was over. One young man started his own business in Toronto, and wrote to his former supervisor offering him a job - which he took. But no matter what we did, or failed to do, it was a sad experience for the staff, as well as the Japanese. For them it meant a loss of freedom, dignity, and above all uncertainty of the future.

1943-1958

Assistant Director, Provincial Welfare Department.

Relief offices established during the depression were ~~xx~~ still in operation, and in some of the larger centres Welfare offices had been set up to deal with child welfare cases and other family problems. Our first objective was to co-ordinate existing services, and establish offices in neglected areas. The Relief offices were staffed by men with no formal training. The Welfare offices staffed by older women with long experience and younger women with training. To bring the two groups together presented many difficulties - and that is the understatement of the year!

The policy of the Department was to employ trained workers, but only a few were available. This led to the establishment of an In-service Training programme. Trained workers were given priority in all staff vacancies. Applicants for in-service were not considered if they were in a position to take the university course. Those accepted were carefully screened. Taken into account was educational background, experience, aptitude, etc., and an expressed desire to take formal training if possible. Over a period of time all untrained workers in the field were given leave of absence to attend classes. Others were given leave to attend University. Eventually the point was reached whereby 90% of staff had either In-service or formal training, and the need for In-service was diminishing.

A magazine "British Columbia Welfare" was published monthly from 1943 to 1953, edited by our Training Supervisor. It had wide distribution, and in it one finds a complete history of the development of the department. It is a thrilling story of what can be done when senior officials work together, and have freedom to use their initiative.

A Family Service Division was developed, and B.C. was the first Province (perhaps the only one) to make provision through legislation for such a service (Social Assistance Act, 1945). This proved beyond doubt that case work services can be an integral part of an assistance-giving agency. This applied to rural areas, in Vancouver and Victoria such cases would be referred to Private Agencies. To encourage municipalities to improve standards of service, the department assigned social workers to municipal offices.

A film "The Friend at the Door" was made by the National Film Board depicting social work in remote areas. It was a great success and was shown in a local Vancouver theatre. It can be obtained through the NFB.

Our Deputy Minister was a remarkable man in many ways. He had the confidence of and support of the Minister. He was a good administrator who delegated authority to others and trusted them to do the job without interference. All senior members of staff made a great contribution to the development of the new programme. The former relief officers caught the enthusiasm, and their unique experience through the rough days of the depression helped many young inexperienced workers.

After making some progress in the field of Public Welfare, although we had not reached our goal, a new government was elected in 1952 and the best part of our programme was shattered.

- 1951 In the midst of all this, I was given six months leave to go to Newfoundland as Consultant on Public Welfare.
- 1958 RETIRED?
- 1959 Gave Seminar on Public Welfare, Washington School of Social Work, Seattle. Also seminars at summer school in 1959 and 1960.
- 1961 Consultant, C.N.I.B. Winnipeg.
- 1961-62 Consultant, Yukon Territory.
- 1963-64 Consultant, City of Ottawa.

Also Studies on Volunteer Bureau, and Christmas Bureau, United Way, Vancouver. and, later, on the Board of A.S.K., a seniors' day-care centre.

- 1957 THE HOWARD RUSSELL MEMORIAL MERIT AWARD was bestowed on her by the American Public Welfare Association
- 1958 Canada's representative at International Conference on Social Work in Tokyo.

A founding member of the B.C. Association of Social Workers.

Amy LEIGH

5788 Highbury St.,
Vancouver, B.C.
April 12, 1984.