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THE JAPANESE PROBLEM

Toru Noji

One of the problems confronting the Americans as well as the Japanese is that of the Japanese Problems. Perhaps, this problem began years ago when our forefathers came to this country, about 1870.

Almost immediately after the close of the Chinese immigration to this country, the Japanese immigration began. Then within 5 years, there were a population of 2,038 Japanese immigrants in the United States; and in the next decade, had increased to 25,326 and by 1930, it had rose to a population of 138,834 on the continental United States; so rapid was the increase in the population of the Japanese, that the extensions of the Chinese Exclusion Act were eminent. And so finally, the Gentleman's Agreement was passed on March 14, 1907 to aid in checking the ever increasing rate of immigrants from Japan. This Agreement was an understanding that the government of Japan was to issue passports only to those returning to the United States to resume a formerly established home or business, to join a parent, wife or child. This agreement checked the immigration rate for a year or two, but thereafter, the Japanese again began to come in increasing number. And so in 1924, the Immigration Act was passed to give California what she wanted, namely, the exclusion of Japanese.

But already, 138,834 Japanese have immigrated into this country, of which 97,436 or 70.2% have concentrated into the state of California, therefore making this immigration problem more or less a problem of that of California. There is at least one representative in every state, except New Hampshire, there are 7 states that report less than 10 and only 8 that report as many as 1,000. Of the total increase of 66,677 from 1910 to 1930, that of 56,100 or 84% has been in California; Washington an increase of 4,908 and Oregon 1540.

But, probably, the greatest social problem behind the Japanese Problem is that of race prejudice. Race prejudice is based first of all upon the fact that difference exist between two races. A strange object, if noticed, causes a feeling of uncertainty, which is akin to unpleasantness or strain. There is a fundamental connection between strange objects of differences and uncertainty, unpleasantness, and being on one's guard. Differences between individuals of one's own race are noted early in life and become automatically accepted. With members of another race the primary racial difference is so pronounced that it overshadows all others, so that the Caucasian first coming into contact with Japanese feels that all Japanese look alike. Just so the Japanese doubtless feel about Caucasian.

This general similarity among the members of a different race has an important bearing upon our subject. For man tends to judge any new experience in terms of similar past experiences. A white man to whom all whites look different is able to meet strange whites with an open mind. A man he met yesterday may have cheated him, but the man he meets today has no feature in common with that man and arouse no distrust; on the other hand, all Filipinos resemble each other decidedly to the white man's eye. The one met yesterday aroused an unfavorable impression and so the physical stimulus presented by the sight of the one met today is so similar that the same unfavorable reaction is immediately produced. Herein lies one of the fundamental bases of race prejudice. We react to all of the new race on the basis of one or very few

experiences; we do not distinguish among them as we do in the case of members of our own race, because we cannot.

Race prejudice is further or more due to the tendency to develop stereotypes of generalizations on insufficient evidence, and from the personal standpoint. The unfamiliar and the new is interpreted by each individual in terms of his own experience. Thus the reaction to the unknown is partly an expression of the unknown itself and partly, often mostly, an expression of the individual's background. Once prejudice has been established toward a single Japanese, the differences in his appearance or manner become signs not merely of membership in the Japanese race but more important still of the stereotyped reactions. When any other Japanese is encountered, the peculiarities of his race set off the stereotyped reaction. The second generation Japanese is not an individual first and incidentally a member of the Japanese race; he is a "Jap" first, endowed with all the undesirable attributes of the stereotype, and only incidentally a particular individual.

As has been pointed out, race prejudice is not an instinctive reaction but is an outgrowth of the peculiarities of human beings, so that for practical purposes it may be viewed as a type of behavior that will arise when two different groups are brought together under ordinary conditions.

Already the fact that Japanese immigration has ceased and that consequently the fear of economic rivalry has been removed from California, has eliminated much of the hard feeling in that state toward the Oriental. Agitation is practically a thing of the past. The Japanese can now be judged on their merits, not as a growing menace.

The second-generation Japanese may remain Oriental in face and figure, but in dress, speech, and manner they are more and more like the American type. The degree of difference, while probably never wholly changing, will become less with each generation. Similarity in ethical standards and ideals is the great common denominator.

On December 1, 1924, the Japanese Diet amended the law of Nationality. By this amendment, a child born of Japanese parents, regardless of where they are living, is not to be classed as a Japanese subject unless the parents declare, within 14 days after birth, their intentions of retaining Japanese nationality. Also any persons may abandon their Japanese citizenship at any time by making a simple notification. This law eliminated the necessity of dual citizenship for those of Japanese ancestry born in Hawaii or on the mainland; before they had been citizens of the United States by birth and of Japan by the Japanese Law.

There is also some difficulties which confront the second generation Japanese. In relation to language, few of the parents really master the English language, and so are separated from their children to a considerable degree, since each prefer a different language. Therefore the second generation Japanese do not lose the distinguishing marks of their race as do so many immigrants, that they are faced with a handicap peculiar to them and to other Caucasians. The difference is not so great as it was to their fathers, owing to their Americanization. But it is still sufficient to be noted. Thus they are unable to escape the racial prejudice that it aches to their parents.

As to the occupation of the Japanese, one half of the Japanese in California are engaged in farming, 20% in small retail businesses, 5% in more general businesses, and only about 1% are engaged in skilled labor. In the field of skilled trade, only here and there in continental United States is there to be found a first generation Japanese earning his living doing skilled work. This is probably due to the fact that they were not skilled when they came here and that organized labor afterward prevented their entry into such fields. But in the Hawaiians, the first generation is said to have gone into such fields to a great extent, due to the lack of white laborers.

Since the Anti-Alien Land Laws were passed, first-generation Japanese were prohibited from buying or even renting agricultural land, but today owing to California Supreme Court decisions, he can take title in the name of his native-born children. And the greater percentage of the first generation Japanese were farming.

But recently, the second generation Japanese are getting farther and farther away from the viewpoint of following agriculture as their future vocation. Reports taken as to the subjects in which the Japanese are planning to specialize show in high school--subject preference as follows: 1. shop work, 2. business, 3. math, 4. biological sciences, 5. Agriculture.

When it is remembered that these Japanese came into more intimate contact with agricultural pursuits and with retailing than with any other vocational activity, it is surprising to find so little interest expressed here in these occupations.

In general, the occupational plans of the Japanese agree very closely with those of white high school boys with the exception that the whites are more enthusiastic about aviation, engineering, and law than the Japanese. But otherwise the second generation Japanese are becoming more and more Americanized in this respect.

In respect to religion, it is stated that the first generation prefer Buddhism to Christianity (77% and 18% resp.). The reverse is the case with the United States born, among whom 39% prefer Buddhism while the 47% of the males and 56% of the females prefer Christianity. There is no evidence that the first generation tend to transfer their religion to Christianity as they continue to live in the United States but their children clearly do so, as do the young Japan born who are growing up in the country.

Social contacts between the whites and Japanese have been largely restricted to those in school. The California Segregation Law was intended to eliminate this, but the law has never been put into operation except in 4 school systems--Courtland, Lorin, Isleton, and Walnut Grove in the Sacramento County but I believe that this segregation has been abandoned. In nine states laws have been passed which forbid intermarriage between Orientals and Caucasians--these states are Arizona, California, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wyoming. This law probably has little effect anyway for there is slight tendency in such intermarriage. The Japanese have strong family ties and their custom of marrying as the elders of the family direct have militated against such intermarriages. But the real objection is said to be the social consideration. Both whites and Japanese oppose such intermarriages and both make it exceedingly disagreeable for those who defy their point of view.

The most important single measure of an individual is his general intelligence score. Review of the literature of Japanese intelligence makes clear that the racial group are about equal in this respect. Educational achievement, particularly when determined by Achievement Tests measures equal also for both white and Japanese. The comparative studies so far made, with one exception, indicate that Chinese and Japanese are retarded somewhat in school with respect to subjects of a linguistic nature but in arithmetic and spelling, seem to be superior to whites. However in one extensive study, equality of performance in reading tests as well as in arithmetic was shown.

Data from high school indicate that 75% of those born in Hawaii and 82% of those born in the United States prefer English to Japanese. Practically all college men (96%) whether in Hawaii or on the United States, prefer English to Japanese. Although the Japanese are superior to the white in securing A and B grades, this superiority decreases steadily from grade 9 to grade 12. Also there is a marked increase among the Japanese of D and A marks as they go higher in school and marked decrease in the same respect for total population. But in relationship to a average pupil, the Japanese obtain higher marks.

Possibly the most serious handicap confronting the second generation is the chaotic state of mind that is induced by the welter of problems confronting them. Conflicting ideas, ideals, and aspiration result in the expenditure of much energy in one direction after another with little or no progress in any direction. Possibly in no age have all young people been more seriously handicapped by this condition. The solution is not, however, for the Japanese American to attribute their troubles to the fact that they are Japanese in origin, or to place all the blame for one's deficiencies upon an external fact over which one has no control rather than to a possible deficiency in one's own character, is more gratifying to one's self-esteem, but it destroys the impetus to self-improvement which might mean future success.

But in December 7, 1941, after the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese government, we were all grouped into an Assembly Center and later in a Relocation Center. This crisis, again revived all of the prejudices and other handicaps of the second generation Japanese in this country, and we are again faced with all of the problems that were and are being faced by our parents. It will probably take generations, and generations before this will be smooth and ironed out.

Here in Relocation Center, the creation of a self-government, self-supporting community of a great assembly of persons drawn suddenly from their homes and their normal occupations is a tremendous task in which the schools share responsibility and opportunity. It is through these schools that the future workers of the community are produced. Schools will assume definite responsibilities in the production, maintenance and operation program on the projects and be given the land, machinery, supplies, and equipments necessary to carry this out; and (2) utilize and organize the work opportunity provided on the projects for the vocational training of students and recognize work experience as an important part of the school program.

School enterprises carried on by students will be directly related to project needs such as food production, a part in such activities as poultry raising, bee-keeping, dairying, hog raising and speciality crops; or research and recording jobs or carpentry. Such training will give a large number of skills needed on the project and will serve as a guide in the choice of a vocation.

There is also a plan by which any high school student over 16, specializing in certain vocational fields, may under the direction of the superintendent of education spend one-half of his time in apprentice training or work experience on the project enterprises during the regular school year, receiving credit toward graduation. These students are eligible for pay and for promotion in the corps. Some of the fields which are being planned for such operations are (1) girls nursing training in connection with the hospital or medical program, (2) training in trades connected with restaurants and hotel operation, (3) manufacturing of all kinds for the needs of the projects, (4) and auto mechanics and repair and maintenance of machinery. Some of the other probable ones are agriculture, animal husbandry, plumbing, and electrical trade, merchandizing, marketing, office work, and a number of pre-professional fields.

The growing demand for workers is opening the way now for employment away from the projects of many citizens of Japanese ancestry. As individuals find jobs and are cleared by the FBI, they will be free to settle outside of military areas, where opportunities are to be found in the fields of domestic service, care of children, general farming, and office work. The schools are endeavoring to use the work opportunities on the relocation projects as a training center and so to gear the projects into the general employment needs of the country.

by TORU NOJI
Sociology
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