Speech of Hon. John C...lier
Commissioner of Indian Affairs
June 27, 1942

Fellow citizens and fellow Americans:

I have to admit to a feeling of rather acute himility in standing before you, and I feel rather tongue-tied. I have been here only a little while. I was here at the very beginning when the first three hundred of you came. This time I have been here for the last two days.

The impression I have now is the same one I had on the terrible two days when the first three hundred of you came -- the impression of great physical discomfort, hardship, and of perfectly marvelous human spirit throughout the colony. And it is that impression which gives me this feeling of almost being bashful in talking to you. Also, I cannot help talking to you as the representative of more than 100,000 of our fellow people, of whom you are a part, and to whom this sudden removal from your homes has come as a shock - even a bitter blow. You have come through, you are passing through, an ordeal. Of course, you are not passing through any greater ordeal endured by people all over the world, but it is a bitter and shocking ordeal.

As I watched the decisions being made -- the decisions that there must be this removal of our Japanese people from the Pacific coast, I could not dispute the practical necessity of it. Probably, it was an inevitable thing. None the less, it was action, which, in the nature of it, was loaded with injustice. Thousands and thousands of deep, bitter, individual injustice had to be done and was done in this removal, although, I imagine you agree that it was inescapable by them.

It came about that the organization, of which I am the chief, was

requested to administer this, which is the largest of the Relocation Centers, the largest of the colonies.

We agreed to accept the responsibility upon a clear and written understanding that the Administrative authority here would be in us. By which, I mean, in the Department of the Interior, in Secretary Harold Ickes and me. That was because we were determined that if we became involved in this resettlement work, if we became responsible for it, we were determined to carry out certain philosophies and certain principles of action.

I shall tell you what those philosophies and principles are in a moment. I shall also guard my statements by saying that we are not in a position to do just anything we want to do. What we do here, we will collaborate with you in doing. It will be done within a nation engaged in what is actually a life and death war. It will be done in a great population which is increasingly possessed of war psychology -- necessary and desirable that it is that way.

Whatever we do here is within the bounding control of the Army and of the War Relocation Authority. Both of those entities, the Western Division of the Army and the War Relocation Authority have shown that they are broadminded, socially minded and free toward you. Nevertheless, our thinking may not be identical with theirs at every point. In talking to you tonight, I can only do so as if I were speaking to one or two of you. It is because of what is in my mind - in my heart. It is because what I think and feel is what the Secretary of the Interior thinks and feels, and what the whole personnel of the

Office of Indian Affairs think and feel, it may have an interest for you.

Here you are, 7500 in number. Tomorrow or the next day five hundred more will come, and groups of five hundred will follow rapidly. Before long, there will be 20,000 here. And that number may be increased to 30,000 later. Here in the middle of the huge Mojave Desert area, at the moment of greatest heat, and with a hot season still three months ahead, you have come, most of you, to stay here for probably a good while to come. It is anybody's guess, but the best opinion, I am able to make a contact with, does not look for this war to come to an end soon. It thinks in terms of several years of warfare before the peace. And when the peace comes, it is very likely that there will be an interim period - not a sudden, hurriedly improvised peace arrangement such as was represented by the catastrophe of the Treaty of Versailles of the last war. Peace, itself, may require a period of time up to years. It is probable that you here will be looking forward to four, five, or six years of life in this place. A period of life long enough for your children to have had, during that time, nearly all of the experiences for developing character, personality, and bent in life for all the years thereafter. Some of you middle-aged young people will be in your earlier middle age and many older people will end their lives in this colony.

We, who are here to work with you and serve you, will gear our thoughts to that sort of opportunity -- to a quasi-permanent setup which might not go on for five or six years, but which should be treated and developed as though it were to go on that long.

We see you gathered here, bringing with you almost every type of occupational ability. People from the country and people from the cities, and people from towns between the country and the cities. People from industries, from mercantile enterprises, from proprietary farming to tenant farming. People unlearned in books and people deeply learned in books and science. Almost the whole range of American life, in its experience and in its equipment, is going to be represented by you who are permanently of us. Fundamentally, we are one people. You are here among us for all time. You will be a growing population here among us in your country.

Here you are assembled, 20,000 or 30,000 of you, uprooted from what you have been doing, from where you have been living and brought together in this huge settlement.

We realize that what can eventuate under these circumstances, in a place like this, could under wrong methods be a very destroying, agonizing, a permanently embittering experience. It could be that. But we are equally certain that if the job here be handled in the right way with the right spirit, then there can come about, here in this Colorado River Colony, a kind and a degree of positive happiness that will be far out and beyond the happiness and experience of most Caucasian communities all over this country.

Our job is to work with you toward making this place a truly happy place where individuals and families will be giving themselves utterly to the community and winning a reward of inward power and inward joy.— Greater than anything external in the whole world.

Now to be more specific. From Wade Head, through all the others, the hope is to help you in the capacity of just doing that — helping

you work out your own arrangement here, your own system of human relations, your own municipal government, your own economic enterprise. Our people are not here to tell you how to do these things. Still less to do these things for you. You are here due to a chain of circumstances over which you had not the faintest control. Circumstances due to changes all over the world. You are here in the capacity of full citizens of the American Commonwealth. Being here in that capacity, it is for you to determine your own fashion of life, your own methods of cooperative action, to make your own life. And our function here is to facilitate your action in any way that we can and then to protect your liberties in so far as we have the power. When I say protect your liberties, I mean your liberties - - all those liberties as citizens of the United States.

- I have to go a little further to convey, not to all of you, but to some of you, what we hope might in retrospect two to five years hence in the future, have meaning. We in this country join with the people of England, the people of Australia, with the Free French, China, etc., in asserting that Democracy is the right way of life. We are waging a war for Democracy. That war is going to be won. There is not the slightest doubt. But when we look around within our own country, whether it be on a national or local scale, we do not find that Democracy has been achieved. It has not been achieved in any of these countries and certainly not in the United States. Our Democracy is an imperfect, embryonic institution as yet.

Democracy means this - that all of the functions of citizens, not only the political functions but also the economic functions, and the

social relationships, are so organized and carried on that every human being, as he comes up through the years of his childhood, could participate with increased activity in the dominant functions of society. Democracy means that everybody takes an active responsibility.

Life in a Democracy, where we merely enjoy certain privileges such as guarantee of the Bill of Rights, is not a very inspiring thing as compared to the quality of life and challenging experiences in a through and through democracy where the whole local community unites in mutual service and in service to the great society. The outcome of this whole, awful world struggle — this awful travail that has the whole world in its grip - the ultimate outcome of the struggle will be determined, not on the battlefield, but in this area of which I speak— whether or not the nations will be moved from behind the mere shadow - the pale promise of democracy and march into creative life which makes real Democracy. Unless we do this, and unless all the countries do this, any peace established will be merely an interlude - a breathing space until the next war.

You are in the middle of a tragedy. You have come through shock, tragedy, and great loss into a situation where the measure of your happiness is determined by your ability to endure what is ahead of you, by your ability to join hands in mutual aid and common enterprise of a useful and helpful nature.

If you come through with flying colors, you will have produced within five years a social demonstration. A demonstration, politically, economically, and socially of a very challenging nature - of a very inspiring and illuminating and challenging nature which will be thrown

out to the United States and the whole world. That can be, and there is every indication that it is goong to take place here - a flowering of mutuality, of teamwork, of cooperative thinking and cooperative work, and of cooperative education, which may, and I think will, make of this community something which, five years from now, will be in terms of social history twenty-five years ahead of the State of Arizona, of the State of California, and of the bulk of the United States. If it can be done that way, anything that you are doing now will be for a brief moment because such results for post war solutions will be enormous. Anyone in this room will gladly give his life now if he could be sure that there will be an emergence of happy humanity out of the present agony and horror.

In this community of yours, (you) we will be not only gaining for yourselves satisfaction, and power, and fame, but will be rendering to this country and to the other countries, including Japan, a momentous sociological human service, lasting peace and a happy humanity. These things are within your power to do and to have. I am moved because things are happening in that direction. Our own personnel is moved in that way. I am not only speaking my own thoughts but just as much that of Wade Head's thoughts, Nell Findley's, and those of all the others on the staff of this project.

I am speaking of one more thing. I am satisfied in my own mind, and we of the Government are satisfied that this colony, as the months go on, is going to provide a democracy of the efficiency and the splendor of cooperative living. It is going to provide that for the advantage of the country. That is our belief, and it is our purpose. Believing that, we are also greatly concerned that the development of this great social

experiment shall be recorded as it goes ahead. We are very much concerned that we and you shall know what is happening as it unrolls so that we can drew individual, economic, and sociological conclusions by the results obtained here.

With that thought in mind, some three or four weeks ago, I went to see Admiral McIntire, President Roosevelt's personal physician and liaison officer of the Navy. I gave my thought of what should happen here - a scientific record of what is occurring. I found that Mr. McIntire was already thinking the same thoughts. He got the Navy to detail one of its scientists, Dr. Alexander Leighton, allowing him to come down to Parker to make an adequate scientific record of the whole experience in Parker colony. Dr. Leighton is a member of the staff of John Hopkins Medical School - a scientist and sociologist with whom we have had occasion to do work in the past, and profoundly impressed with his human attitude and profundity as a thinker. Dr. Leighton will be here in the capacity of Director of Public Health. He will make studies in order that the whole world will read when the scientific record is done.