

Tule Prison Camp Working Out Well

By HALE SCARBROUGH

It's a pretty good place, observed the 31-year-old convicted forger:

"The only bad thing is just being here at all."

He was referring to the Tulelake Prison Camp, one of the newest institutions of the federal prison system, located at the Newell townsite, eight miles south of Tulelake. The camp has been in operation just about six months.

At present it has some 60-odd inmates and 18 officers and technical men making up the camp personnel. In addition, a number of wives and children of camp employees live in the compound.

The 11-acre camp occupies what was the military area of the World War II Japanese internment center, and is as peculiar a prison as you can find in this part of the country. There isn't any gate—just an opening in the fence—and there aren't any cells, barred windows or locks. The prisoners are called inmates and the guards are called correctional officers.

The Tulelake camp, along with others, was set up by the U.S. Bureau of Prisons last spring in conformity with a certain provision of the so-called McCarran Act, which concerns the detention of subversives in the event of war or national emergency. The others are located at Wickenburg, Ariz.; Florence, Ariz.; Allenwood, Pa.; and Avon Park, Fla. In addition, the federal prison service operates camps of similar nature in conjunction with the prison at McNeil at Montgomery, Ala.; Tucson, Ariz.; and Mill Point, W. Va.

They can, when needed, be used to house persons considered dangerous to the government, agents of or sympathizers with an enemy country. That'll be when, and if, certain provisions of the McCarran Act are put into operation.

On that eventually, a Communist newspaper published in Los Angeles recently had a reporter in the Tulelake area and came out with an edition devoted entirely to the Tulelake camp, labeling it Federal Prison Camp 38, Concentration Camp, USA.

The Tulelake camp, and others like it, in the opinion of the Los Angeles publication, are destined for occupancy by "progressives and trade unionists who dare to speak up against high prices, attacks on labor, and the drive for war."

That's just so much bilgewater.

Prime Function

The primary function of this camp and others of the same order is to take some of the pressure off federal penal institutions, to serve as a sort of place of reward for federal prisoners who show that they can be trusted with a measure of freedom and are willing to work.

The 60-some-odd people at Tulelake do work, and work hard. The military compound taken over was used for several years for housing of transient laborers, and the care taken of the property was far from good.

When the Bureau of Prisons took over the camp site this spring, an amazing amount of work needed to be done to refurbish and repair the buildings and grounds to the point that they will be usable in the style to which the federal government is accustomed. The first men brought in were transferees from McNeil Island Prison and they were put to work fixing themselves a place to live. The prisoners are building their own prison.

In six months several barracks buildings, a mess hall, officers quarters and other buildings of the 40 on the compound have been restored for use, and in another year the whole refurbishing job should be completed.

The prisoners work an approximate eight-hour day, under the direction of camp officers who are qualified as carpenters, plumbers, electricians and the like.

One of the buildings being worked on now is the dispensary. A minor surgical room is already in and outfitted, as well as a storeroom of medical supplies obtained from a U.S. Navy ship mothballed at Portland. The prison can buy equipment from laid-up ships at 10 cents on the dollar. A dental room is being installed now.

The dispensary is presided over by a former Navy corpsman, but a Tulelake physician, Dr. I. Spomer, has been made a member of the prison staff to take care of serious medical work. A dentist also is to be added to the staff.

Religious services are held each Sunday in a chapel building which is to be revamped later to include a motion picture projector. Ministers from Tulelake churches conduct services.

Quite A Change

The federal penal system has undergone quite a change since he entered it, reminisces Supt. Lemuel Fox, who started as a guard more than 20 years ago.

"In those days the guy with the lowest brow and the widest shoulders was the best guard," Fox declared.

The change has been from the theory of retribution toward the theory of restitution, restoring the prisoner's faith in himself and in his ability to get along with the laws of society.

A big change has occurred in prison personnel. Instead of being guards hired for their brute strength, men come into the penal service now as men with the title of "correctional officer" and advance by becoming an instructor, being able to instruct men under them in any of the dozens of trades which today can be learned in a big federal prison. Actually, they're job foremen.

Tulelake, of course, being the baby of the penal system, and a pretty small baby at that, is short of trades that can be taught the inmates. Outside of plumbing, carpentering, electrical work, cooking, painting and office work, the opportunities are small. But with a limited supply of inmates, they are all kept busy.

Tulelake is at the lower end of the federal prison system, ranking the famed Alcatraz at the top, along with the five other federal penitentiaries at Atlanta, Leavenworth, McNeil Island, Terre Haute

and Lewisburg.

A second group includes reformatories, usually for young persons, such as the institutions at El Reno, Okla., for men and Alderson, W. Va., for women. There are five of them. Then there are seven correctional institutions, plus hospitals and institutions for juveniles. The range is from maximum security, as at "escape-proof" Alcatraz, to minimum security, at Tulelake.

The inmates at Tulelake are full trustees. They move around over the compound with considerable freedom and are never locked in. Not a gun or a club is in sight.

Although they are counted and checked regularly and often, the opening in the fence is always there. So far, none has used it. Only one man—he was having difficulties with another prisoner—dared to skip out, and he went to the office and asked to be taken away, saying if he stayed there much longer he was afraid he would take off. He was brought to Klamath Falls for detention in the County Jail and eventually taken on to another federal institution, one that didn't have the outside so invitingly near.

Keeping Them In

"The only thing keeping them here," says Fox, "is the program."

The program is planning for the inmate's eventual release from incarceration, and starts as soon as a convicted in Federal Court. A probation officer attached to the court investigates the prisoner's background, family and the like and the information goes with the prisoner to whatever institution he is sentenced.

At the prison the investigation is continued until the federals know more about the inmate than the inmate does himself. All the data goes into shaping his status in the institution, his work, his education or training and the planning for his eventual release even to the type of job obtained for him after release.

Various federal prisons have various types of industries (they are not bowling to the sort of private business-labor union pressure that prevents institutions such as the Oregon State Prison from providing enough jobs to keep their inmates busy). Alcatraz, for instance, has a laundry, doing work for the Army and Navy around San Francisco; McNeil has a giant cannery; Leavenworth a shoe factory; another institution processes tobacco; another makes clothing; Atlanta makes mail bags. The goods are sold to other governmental agencies.

A little-known corporation, Federal Prison Industries Inc., operates all these plants and the profit made is used throughout the federal prison system to provide incentive pay for outstanding workers.

Tulelake in its present operation doesn't manufacture or grow anything to contribute to the profit of Federal Prison Industries Inc., but it does benefit from the profit, enough to provide from \$10 to \$25 a month pay for some of the men working at the camp.

Spend Just \$10

But regardless of the pay, or what money a man may obtain from a hobby, such as leather tooling, or how they happen to be fixed financially on the outside, an inmate is allowed to spend just \$10 a month at the camp commissary. Any other money they obtain or have is deposited for them in a trust account in a Federal Reserve Bank.

That's the great leveler. Among the Tulelake inmates right now are a couple of men reputed to be wealthy. They had some confection with slot machines up in the Portland area, and neglected to cut in Uncle Sam. They can spend just \$10 a month, the same as the fellow whose only income is what he earns by sweat.

Of course, more money can be spent by special permission, for such things as materials for the furtherance of hobbies, which are encouraged, and for educational correspondence courses, also encouraged.

Several of the Tulelake inmates are interested in various hobbies, and eventually one of the camp buildings will be fixed up as a hobby shop. A display case might be set up so that their products can be sold to the public.

Most of the men at Tulelake earned their way into the minimum security camp by maintaining a good record at another institution, proving steady conduct, yet in recent weeks several persons have come to Tulelake on direct sentence from federal court. Several also have been released from the camp on parole or at the expiration of their term, some to reformers in the Tulelake area.

One idea back of prison camps, such as the one at Tulelake, is to provide some incentive for men incarcerated in federal prisons to keep their records clean, so they might be "promoted" to a place outside the walls where they have some measure of freedom not allowable in a penitentiary or reformatory.

More Incentive

Then after arrival at the camp, there are still further incentives for making good, including one very powerful one.

The federal prison system operates under a "merititious good time" law, by which a certain number of days each month are tacked on a prisoner's sentence if he behaves himself. This statutory "good time" is five days a month for short sentences, up to 10 days a month for longer sentences. In addition to that, a man at Tulelake can add from three days to five days a month good time to his score.

It takes a long time to change a whole concept of penology and punishment, but the change is being made throughout the entire federal system. The Tulelake camp right now is something of an experiment, and only time will tell whether it will pan out.

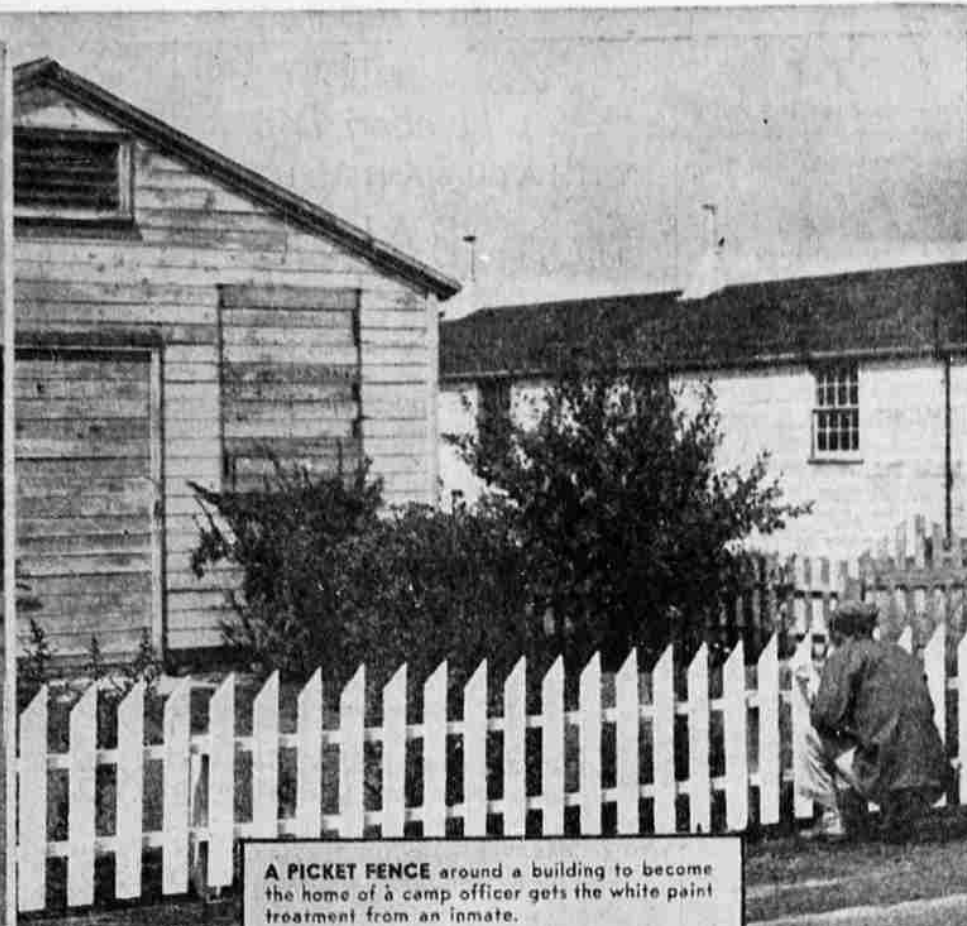
But as of right now, the inmates themselves seem to think it will. Public acceptance and support would help.



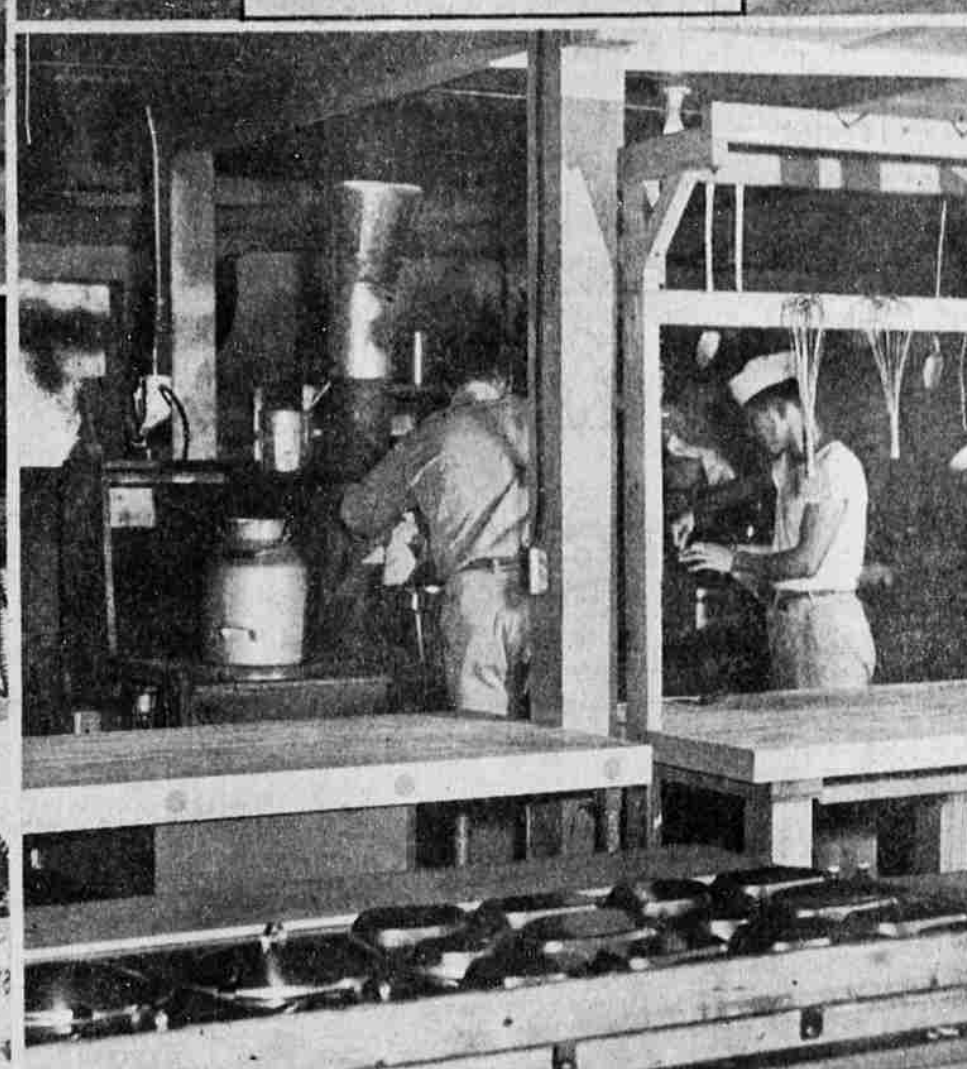
EACH NEW MAN coming to the Tulelake Prison Camp gets thoroughly interviewed during his first days there. Here Capt. Edward R. Siminski, Superintendent Lemuel Fox and a newcomer get acquainted.



ONE DAY SOON articles such as these made by inmates in their spare time will be on sale at the camp.



A PICKET FENCE around a building to become the home of a camp officer gets the white paint treatment from an inmate.



THE FEDERAL PRISON system allows just under five pounds of food per man per day, weighing it right down of the salt and pepper, and most inmates gain weight. The camp kitchen is shown above.



LIVING QUARTERS for the inmates resemble nothing so much as a military barracks. Much clothing and equipment in use at the camp is cast-off Navy or Army gear. Below is Tulelake's equivalent of a cell block.