

Japanese American Citizens League

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MEMORANDUM

To: Chapter Presidents
Redress Representatives

Subj: National Redress
Meeting

From: Bill Yoshino

Date: December 1, 1980

Following are the major points covered at the November 21-23 Redress meeting in San Francisco.

Discussion on the impact of the elections on the redress issue stressed several major points. First, the anticipated priorities of the new administration and Congress include an emphasis on defense spending, balancing the federal budget, cutting taxes, and lowering inflation. This evidences a broad shift to conservatism. It was also noted that the Commission appointments will be made by an outgoing President with the findings and actions of that Commission having to be dealt with by a new Congress. This being the case, it would be unduly optimistic to expect major things from this Commission because it is difficult to get a Republican President and Senate to follow through on a Democratic initiative.

The discussion then shifted to what JACL should be concerned about in approaching the Commission hearings and establishing a position on the issue. It was reported that influential individuals of the Washington, D.C. Advisory Group envision JACL's role at the hearings as that of clearing the record of the evacuation and JACL's role therein. The redress committee remained adamant in its position on monetary compensation as the end result of its program. At the same time, there was general agreement that the focus of the campaign should be channelled to building a case through factfinding and constructing a thorough and detailed accounting of all aspects of the World War II incarceration; that the important and immediate concern is to build a record upon which damages can clearly be shown and for which appropriate remedies can be made.

At this time it is difficult to plan a logistical strategy for the Commission hearings in that the Commissioners have not been appointed and the appropriation to fund the Commission has not been made. It is difficult to determine what the process will be

for appointments to the Commission staff. Traditionally, the Commission members choose staff, however, this may not be the process. The staff director is most influential to the proceedings of the Commission.

The strategy and advance work in orchestrating the hearings are critical. In the actual testimony, the oral portion is for impact and appeal and the written portions will build the record. The formal testimony will be in written form, and the oral testimony will be a "highlight". There also exists the need for "expert" testimony and a criterion must be set for this.

It is difficult to determine when the hearings will occur, but it was suggested that we anticipate them in the late spring or early summer. There should probably be a general overview of testimony given at each site and there can be a principle focus of testimony at each site. An interpreter should be requested of the Commission.

With respect to the recommendations made by the Commission, the JACL should assess the recommendation and make a decision to accept or choose other alternatives. As to whether Congress will act on the recommendations it will depend upon someone in Congress pushing the recommendations very strongly, otherwise the total report may simply be filed.

An important aspect of JACL's position is to clearly build the record of damages. This does not mean that a final position will revolve around a set dollar amount. The varying types of damages can include a variety of remedies which could include grants for various programs. Thus, different defined damages can mean different defined remedies. The concept of individual compensation remains as a vital part of the program.

The Commission will have a public information officer and others to serve as advance persons into hearing site areas. A list of the vernacular press should be made available to the Commission staff. JACL can serve as the intermediary between the vernaculars and the Commission staff.

It is important that JACL and its chapters identify and cultivate the press and media with whom we will be working. It must be emphasized that media coverage is important on different levels. Not only will it serve educational purposes, but it will also be impressive to the Commissioners.

There was discussion as to what National JACL should provide to the chapters in preparation of the hearings. These items include press kits, timelines, national presence at the hearing sites, and summaries of testimonies. There is a vital need for an overall redress coordinator. The budget for the coming year was affirmed at \$240,000. Fund-raising means were left to the discretion of the districts and Chapters.