

RAFU SHIMPO

March 24 '80

Nearly 1400 Attend JACL Testimonial

None of the pre-event fanfare generated by the Japanese American Citizens League to draw attention to its "American Testimonial" even approached what finally transpired Saturday evening at the Bonaventure Hotel. What was intended to be a tribute to the five Nikkei in the United States Congress turned itself into what can best be described as a micro-cosmic study of Japanese America as it exists today. And before the lights and cameras of the media, a real-life drama unfolded, pitting the artificiality and decadence of a \$100-a-plate dinner for the community's elite in a grating coun-

nearly a half-year ago. The banquet/testimonial was beginning to develop momentum when on March 11, controversial U.S. Senator S.I. Hayakawa made his latest reference to the wartime detention in statements about the Iranian hostage situation. The junior senator's comments that "the U.S. should round up Iranian nationals in this country and put them in relocation centers the way we did the Japanese during World War II," outraged the Nikkei and the rest of the nation, and drew a morbid attention to the JACL dinner.

Last week, with only a few days

Inouye, Matsunaga Not Able to A

Anticipation was further heightened when it became known that Senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga of Hawaii would not appear at the testimonial. JACL spokespersons relayed the news that Senator Inouye had come down with flu earlier in the week and that Senator Matsunaga had injured his back that very morning and both would be unable to attend.

Tension was vented early. At a pre-dinner press conference in the

into a soapbox platform for the promotion of his "American Protection Sovereignty Act," which provides for the registration, detention, incarceration and ultimately the deportation of Iranian citizens in the United States.

Prefacing his statements by saying he was "eager that the (commission) bill be passed and that a thorough examination be made as to the justice or injustice of the internment during World War II..." He added, however, that Saturday being the 159th day since the capture of U.S. hostages by Iranian militants in Tehran, he would concentrate most of his remarks on that national emergency, which he said he felt to be "a much more serious national emergency" than the reparations or study commission bill issue.

Then, the stuff hit the proverbial fan.

Reporter Judd Rose from KNBC television first confronted Hayakawa, "Many of your constituents, to say the very least, were dismayed and shocked about your comments concerning taking Iranians into captivity, especially in light of your heritage. Perhaps you'd comment on the reaction to that and why you said it in the first place."

Hayakawa then embarked on a long explanation of his stands on the Japanese American internment and on the precedents in American law for interning "enemy aliens." He stressed that his proposal, unlike the actions taken against the Japanese during World War II, would affect only Iranian nationals and not citizens. "I want to make this perfectly clear, this is different from the Japanese evacuation," the 73-year old senator declared.

Tateishi attempted twice to steer the news conference back to the JACL bills, but reporters would not change their line of questioning.

Asked to respond to Hayakawa's proposal of depriving Iranians of their rights to freedom of movement, Rep. Matsui criticized the California senator's citizen, non-citizen criterion for possible detention by pointing out the fact that loyal Japanese American non-citizen Issei were interned during World War II without due process of law.

"I must beg to differ very strongly with Senator Hayakawa on this issue," stated Matsui. "I think it is an issue of human



PRESS CONFERENCE CLASH—Nikkei Congressmen Norman Y. Mineta (right) and Robert T. Matsui (center) joined in rebuking Sen. S. I. Hayakawa for his views on internment of non-citizen Iranians Saturday at the Bonaventure Hotel.

terpoint with concern over what course of action will be taken in gaining redress and reparation for this community's 40-year old touchstone issue—the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry in U.S. government concentration camps during World War II.

Ostensibly, a fund-raising event for the JACL's effort to obtain passage of Congressional bills providing for the creation of a fact-finding commission to study the wartime internment experience, preparations for the dinner, the largest of its kind in the history of the Nikkei community, began

remaining until the testimonial, rumors circulated that groups which had sponsored tables at the dinner were pulling out of the event in protest of the JACL's intention to honor Hayakawa. But Saturday Cadillacs and Mercedes filled with tuxedoed and gowned Japanese Americans began pulling into the subterranean garage of the Bonaventure at about 5 p.m. Speculation on how the audience would greet Hayakawa dominated the small talk of most of the banquet-goers. The media, poised and waiting for more than a week, moved in for the kill.

hotel's Los-Feliz Room, Hayakawa and the two other Nikkei members of Congress present—Rep. Robert T. Matsui of Sacramento and Rep. Norman Y. Mineta of San Jose—disagreed sharply on both the redress issue and the idea of interning Iranians in relocation centers.

Although JACL National Committee on Redress chairperson, John Tateishi attempted to keep questions from the press in the area of his organization's support for the two study commission bills now before Congress—S. 1647 and HR 5499—Hayakawa quickly transformed the press conference

Dinner; Walk-Out Protest Staged

Attend; Calif. Senator Leaves Early

rights. I think it is an issue where the United States, if it used these powers, would be violating due process of law.

"I might add that my grandmother was sent to these internment camps and I know that the mothers of many of those sitting out here right now were interned in the camps. And I must say that my grandmother was here for about 70 years. She also had five children and although she could not be a citizen of this country, she was one of the most loyal Americans I could ever imagine. When I became a member of the United States Congress, my grandmother was one of the proudest persons in this country. And so I must beg to differ with the senator about the distinction between citizens and non-citizens. I think that's nonsense," said the Sansei House member.

Following Matsui's statement, persons watching the press conference from a hallway and even some members of the television camera crews broke into spontaneous applause. Hayakawa, attempted to interject a thought and a late-arriving Mineta then joined the fray. This heated exchange followed:

Hayakawa: "I made that distinction, Bob."

Mineta: "Senator, I don't know how you can make that distinction (between citizen and non-

citizen) . . ."

Matsui: "Senator, this is really good press but it is wrong. That's all I can say."

Hayakawa: "You're misrepresenting what I just said . . ."

Matsui: "I don't think so."

Mineta: "How is it (Sen. Hayakawa) that you can make that distinction between a citizen and a non-citizen? What difference does it make whether a Persian rug merchant in San Marino, California being thousands of miles away from Iranians, all of a sudden gets stuck in a camp? There is no reason for it whatsoever."

Hayakawa: "Alright, let me explain. The powers given to the President do not necessarily require him to put those people into a camp. He can start out simply by putting all the members of their diplomatic corps under house arrest. If that brings no results, he can round up 500 students, illegally entered students. He can expand it or contract it . . ."

Mineta: "He can do that under present law."

Hayakawa: "Yes, that's right . . ."

Mineta: "He doesn't need your law, so I don't know what this discussion or your law is about."

"My views are neither vague nor nebulous," Hayakawa responded to another newsman's questioning. "If I have to worry

about who's going to object to my legislation, when it comes from the depth of my own thinking, I'm not worthy of being a politician. I vote my conscience," Hayakawa said, hitting the table in front of him for emphasis. "If the Japanese don't like it, it's too bad. If the Japanese like it, it's fine. But I vote my conscience, I vote my convictions."

Hayakawa added that a recent Herald Examiner poll showed that 6024 respondents agreed with his views on this subject and 1020 opposed them.

"The same people wrote in 1942 to put us in camp," Rep. Mineta added.

At a private cocktail reception for major sponsors of the JACL testimonial following the press conference, it was hard to tell how Senator Hayakawa's Iranian-Camp remarks had impacted on the Japanese American public, if at all. Those attending this invitation-only reception greeted the controversial lawmaker with the same enthusiasm as they did Reps. Matsui and Mineta. Small talk, not discussions of redress-reparations, dominated this crowd made up of community and civic leaders who had contributed at least \$1000 to the JACL fund.

Outside the Bonaventure, and even in the lobby area of the California Ballroom where the huge banquet was to be held, however, it was a different story. Several of those paying to honor the Nikkei congressmen, refused to shake

hands with Hayakawa as he made his way to the head table. Polite debates of the merits of the JACL's commission approach as compared to direct monetary redress and vice versa were not uncommon among this strata of testimonial guest. To those on the sidewalks outside the posh hotel, the issues of redress and Hayakawa's Iranian detention proposal were of paramount importance. They handed out leaflets decrying Hayakawa's statements and chanted slogans like, "Hayakawa Shut Your Trap, We Don't Want to Hear Your Crap."

In all, about 120 Asians, young and old demonstrated against Hayakawa's statements Saturday. They were divided into two groups, reportedly because of theoretical differences. One group was made up of Asian members of groups aligned with the Communist Workers Party. The other consisted of members and supporters of the Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization. The Los Angeles Police Department had put their Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT) on alert in case of problems. Walkie-talkie-equipped security personnel were a common sight inside the hotel.

Except for the remarks of the legendary JACL adviser Mike Masaoka, Sansei Democrat Matsui and Hayakawa, the banquet itself was anti-climactic. Both Masaoka, and Matsui received standing ovations following their (Continued on Page 4)

'An American Testimonial' . . .

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speeches. Hayakawa was booed when introduced at the head table by television newscaster Tritia Toyota, the mistress of ceremonies. (He waved a red-and-white Tam O'Shanter derisively in response to the hecklers). The outspoken senator's speech later in the program was interrupted by a walkout of between 40 and 60 guests and by periodic catcalls, booing and angry statements from the audience. While the statements by Messrs. Masaoka, Matsui and Mineta were interrupted several times by applause, the only positive response Hayakawa elicited from the audience

was a polite 10-second smattering of clapping following his sometimes rambling, nearly 40-minute long address.

The group of guests walking out of the room during Hayakawa's remarks were led by Nisei Fred Hoshiyama of the Venice-Culver JACL chapter, Ron Wakabayashi, chairperson of the JACL's Ethnic Concerns Committee, Dr. Mitsuo Inouye, Sue Embrey of the Manzanar Committee, City Human Relations Commissioner Toshiko Yoshida and Amy Uno Ishii, sister of the late Nisei civil libertarian Dr. Edison Uno.

"Responding to the taking of our hostages by denying due process to Iranians in this country is

terrorism American style," said Hoshiyama. "This dinner is a farce. My walking out is a matter of conscience. Vigilance is the price of freedom."

Dr. Inouye, perhaps best known for his work with atomic bomb victims living in the United States, commented, "I've served my time and I don't want anyone else to go through the same thing American citizen or not."

Community activist Mark Mayeda, son of the late Rev. Sentoku Mayeda, said, "I think the senator's position is inappropriate. He and his views do not deserve respect, or even to be listened to."

Perhaps, lost in the attention

given to Senator Hayakawa, was an eloquent and, in its own right, controversial address by 'CL leader Masaoka. One of the main features of Masaoka's speech, the long-time Japanese American community leader may have turned another page in the story of Japanese American participation in mainstream American life in advocating that a "National Japanese American Political Action Committee" be formed under the aegis of the JACL to assist Nikkei candidates in seeking and holding public office. (Texts of the Masaoka and Hayakawa speeches are reprinted elsewhere on this page).

—DWIGHT CHUMAN