

1 recommendations to preserve and rectify the honor and
2 integrity of this Nation.

3 CHAIRMAN PUCINSKI: Our first witness will be
4 Alderman Orr, the sponsor of the resolution. Alderman
5 Orr.

6 ALDERMAN ORR: With your pleasure, Mr. Chairman,
7 do you want me to come up here or --

8 CHAIRMAN PUCINSKI: That's fine.

9 ALDERMAN ORR: I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman,
10 for calling this meeting and giving us this opportunity to
11 present this resolution to your committee. Other
12 witnesses here today will be able to explain the history
13 of the issue, the work of the Commission on Wartime
14 Relocation Internship of Civilians and the significance of
15 the Commission's recommendations. We have people present
16 here today who lived through the difficult times and who
17 were interned by the Federal Government. Their story is
18 poignant and sometimes painful. My goal is not to reopen
19 these kinds of wounds but rather to face up to a sad
20 chapter in American history, recognize our mistakes and
21 rededicate ourselves to the protection of our civil
22 liberties.

23 Some may question the need for the City
24 Council to concern itself with this issue. Others may

wonder why we need to take any action now at all. I would
like to focus my attention on those two issues for just a
moment. First, I'm convinced that every level of
government; city, state and federal, must accept
responsibility for the protection of civil liberties. No
single branch is solely charged with that job. Civil
liberties are one of the building blocks of our democracy
and; therefore, must remain a yardstick by which we judge
our accomplishments. We cannot claim that we have done
any adequate job in office while at the same time other
branches of government neglects or infringes on the rights
of any citizen. Many of us, of course, may wish that
someone else would handle such controversial matters, but
we all share mutual responsibility. Every elected
official should enter office with a willingness to
constantly review the ways our government operates, and it
is in this capacity today that we take stock of our past
actions and lend our voice to those of the Commission.

Secondly, it is important that we act now.

In the rush to conclude its business in the Congress, it
has neglected this matter. However, we, I believe, can
play a key role in keeping that issue alive. It is
doubtful that the 98th Congress will, of course, return to
Washington to resolve any of the outstanding questions

before the end of the year. Therefore, it is important
that we provide a clear message to the 99th Congress when
it convenes in January of 1985. Our message should be
that we are concerned about the treatment of those who
were interned during the Second World War and following,
and we need Congress to make a decision on the
recommendations of the U.S. Commission.

The defense of civil liberties and the fight
to correct past wrongs benefits each one of us directly.
This fight strengthens our system. It re-enforces our
protections against future intolerance and satisfies our
desire for justice. I'm not asking you or anyone to
support this effort because it helps a special group of
people. I'm asking for support because it helps us all.
I think many of us and perhaps you, Mr. Chairman, since
you have been in the unique position to be both
congressperson as well as in the City Council, and perhaps
we all remember the sad days of World War II and the fears
at that time. One of our greatest statemen, Chief Justice
Warren, who unfortunately was involved in the sad actions
of those days, he is one of the people that have
forcefully spoke out prior to his death of this injustice
and hoped to see it corrected; and I think what we are
trying to do here today and what other cities hopefully

are doing around the country to encourage their congress
people to act is to recognize the mistake that we made
regardless of the reasons at the time and recognize the
mistake and offer apologizies and some limited
compensation to Japanese Americans who have suffered not
only from those events at that particular time but also
from the failure of the Federal Government to acknowledge
those mistakes. So, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN PUCINSKI: I would like to commend
Alderman Orr for his sensitivity and efforts to correct
what may very well be described as perhaps the darkest
page of American history. I remember it well. I remember
when Pearl Harbor occurred. I remember the massive
arrests. These are all American citizens. It could have
happened to any one of us. I think, though, that in the
long span of history, and we are a very young nation, just
over two hundred years old; and we are going to be around
here for many centuries to come, I think that the brutal
denial of rights to the Japanese Americans in the
beginning of World War II will serve as a constant
reminder. I don't know where destiny will take us. I
don't know what other emergencies are going to be in
America, but I'm sure for centuries to come any effort to
repeat this scandalous behavior will be thwarted by the