

June 14, 1988

Dear Helen, [Kawagoe]

I've been thinking about your candidacy for JACL president and possible suggestions for your platform as you requested again on Sunday.

Retirement and aging of the Nisei are probably the most relevant and appreciated issues for our generation. I think this is even more meaningful when one considers that it has become a national American concern -- with studies in aging only now being comprehensively explored in the academic area. Thanks to the wonderful world of chemistry, people are living longer than ever before, creating problems which did not exist previously. When I talked with Michi about your platform some months ago, she agreed that this should be among the priorities.

But I know the above sounds pretty tame -- and too sane and similar to what the other presidential candidates will offer.

Now, if you really want something controversial there's one thing I think demands an early response. It can't be dragged around like Redress was for years and years, from convention to convention. If that occurs -- the dragging -- we'll all be gone before its resolution. And this is something that our generation -- yours and mine -- has to bear responsibility for.

I'm referring to the continuing hostility (poor choice of word?) between the draft resisters in camp and those who claim that only men who served their country deserve real recognition for accelerating our acceptance after the war.

I would like to live to see some reconciliation -- and recognition -- to those who addressed the same principles in their unique and heroic way. Could it not be possible to effect something similar to the "Welcome Home," for Vietnam veterans? Does JACL have such a poverty of spirit that they would be opposed to a public acknowledgment of the contribution of the resisters? I realize there are those like Masaoka and Hosokawa (see his PC column 6/3/88) who may be adamant in their refusal to give the resisters their fair share of credit. But do they (JACL) have the right to play God, to pass judgment? And if so, by what authority? Surely, not based on any historical evidence -- for everything I have read tends to discredit JACL in this particular instance.

William Hohri's recent book, "Repairing America," has interesting testimony by Jack Tono on page 172. Also, see PC of 5/27. I think Frank Emi, who was an important dissenter, lives in the L. A. area. If you are seriously interested I think he would be a good source to contact.

I realize this may come as a bombshell to some of the stalwart JACL'ers. But I also know that people like the late Min Masuda acknowledged to me that in retrospect the real heroes were the draft resisters.

There is also another problem. So many of us Nisei are not just strong-headed, but hard-headed. And so damned stubborn-stupid that once we have something set in our minds, right or wrong, there is no yielding. Even if it is to the detriment of all of us.

I also don't know how the resisters feel after all these years of JACL scorn. Would they feel it below their dignity to accept such belated acknowledgment?

I can only state with certainty there is no better qualified person than you to effect this needed reconciliation within the Japanese American community than you. Surely, with all your political experience and expertise -- not to mention

your charisma -- you should be able to pull it off.

The only thing is you may be taking a huge risk -- and perhaps the presidency of JACL is more important to you than such a gamble. I don't know what kind of gambling woman you are -- whether you play only safe games. But if you are willing to chance it, you would at least bring this matter to a head -- give it the exposure it deserves -- rather than its continuing to be a burr on the Nisei psyche.

Called Ray Uno tonight. He admit's he's closeted in his judicial ivory tower. Said he has endorsed you for president. Ray agrees if a healing is to occur it cannot be delayed much longer, "or we'll all be dead." As a former national JACL president, I think his opinion bears some weight. But, then too, he also possesses a higher intellect.

Since he's been judge he really isn't that involved with JACL. It's only because of Harry Honda's two visits within months to Salt Lake that I've seen Ray. Harry always wants to see Ray when he hits town, so I invite him and Yo to dinner. Ray's one of the nicest people I like to disagree with. But we both concur on the resister issue.

He also suggested in regard to retirement and aging that one has to bear in mind that the program has to be structured for Nisei. It won't be a pattern for the Sansei, whose experiences are so dissimilar and advantaged than ours. So if anyone says we're writing a textbook for the Sansei to follow -- cultural heritage -- screw that noise.

I don't know how helpful these suggestions are to you. Perhaps you may feel they are inappropriate for your particular campaign. I would hesitate to suggest the resister issue to any other candidate. Aside from our long and enduring friendship -- Butte High -- I feel I know the strength and sincerity of your character. So I will understand perfectly if you choose to ignore the resister issue. If it is something you cannot believe in, cannot commit yourself to, it is the wrong issue for you to undertake.

Best to Tak. From the last photo you sent, both of you are HUGELY happy. We've got a weight problem in the family, too. Conrad is around six pounds overweight, hitting the scales at 106.6 yesterday. Enclosed is a fairly recent snap of him. Since Ernie's taking photography classes, our little boy is a favorite and constant subject. He's a very sweet dog.

Good luck in your campaign.

As ever,