

HOOD RIVER SERVES A PURPOSE

That Hood River post of the American Legion is getting the castigating which it deserves.

From coast to coast, from the eastern seaboard to Hawaii, there is sharp criticism of the Oregon legionnaires who erased from their rolls the names of members who are Americans of Japanese ancestry--most of whom are either fighting on the European front or have been sent home, wounded or ill.

The Star-Bulletin has received many letters on this incident, and on the related matter of the return of Americans of Japanese parentage, and their Japanese alien parents, to the Pacific coast zones from which they were evacuated as an emergency wartime measure.

Significantly, by far the larger proportion of these letters severely censure the Hood River post, and stinging rebuke the spirit of intolerance which would bar these Japanese from returning to their homes with the war emergency past.

Most of these letters are from Americans of Caucasian blood. Among the writers are men of all branches of Uncle Sam's service. Many are former residents of the Pacific coast, or still call that section their home.

It is noticeable that the letters which criticize the Hood River legionnaires, and criticize the "bar-all-Japs" sentiment shown on the Pacific coast, are not, primarily, defending the Japanese, as a race or as individuals.

They are defending the spirit of justice, fair play, freedom under the American constitution.

These writers realize that a spirit of intolerance which today strikes at the Japanese may tomorrow strike at the Chinese, the Mexicans, the Jews.

What today is racial intolerance may tomorrow be religious intolerance. What today is arrayed against one oriental race may tomorrow be arrayed against all--or even against some European races.

This indeed is the very fundamental of the whole fight for fair play toward the Japanese of the Pacific coast. It is not a particular liking for or favoritism toward the Nipponese people. It is the much broader conviction that our polyracial republic, our government of the people, can not endure unless every racial element within that republic enjoy its rights, exercise its freedoms, as guaranteed by the constitution.

Fortunately the race-baiters of the Pacific coast states do not speak for all the citizens of those states.

In every one of the Pacific coast communities from which the Japanese were evacuated to relocation camps, there have been fearless and fairminded citizens to speak out for justice.

Their voices are the more emphatic now, the more heard now, the more respected now, as the thunder of war recedes far from the west coast, far from that section of the Pacific, and most of the military restrictions and regulations on life are removed or relaxed.

The Hood River incident, shocking as it is to the American sense of fair play, has proved useful. It serves a purpose.

The national reaction against it shows that the main current of Americanism flows strong and full in wartime, inspired and impelled by that innate love of justice and tolerance of racial differences which are part of America.