

August 19, 1981

Editor
Wall Street Journal
Dow Jones & Company, Inc.
Editorial and Corporate Headquarters
22 Cortlandt Street
New York, N.Y. 10007

RE: The Danger of "We" and "They" - An Editorial Reply

Dear Editor,

This is in response to your editorial of July 27, 1981, entitled, "Keep Internment Interred".

In 1942, as pointed out, the President of the United States issued an Executive Order by which every American of Japanese ancestry on the West Coast was rounded up, removed from his home, job and community and interned in relocation camps.

Noted American jurisprudential scholar Eugene Rostow, in 1945, wrote of this act: "It was calculated to produce both individual injustice and deep-rooted social maladjustments of a cumulative and sinister kind. All in all, the internment of the West Coast Japanese is the worst blow our liberties have sustained in many years." (Yale Law Journal, Vol. 54, No. 3, June 1945, pp. 489-490).

Over thirty years later, President Gerald R. Ford, informally rescinding the Order and admitting the wrong done, said "...we have learned from the tragedy of that long-ago experience forever to treasure liberty and justice for each individual American..."

Your editorial however, in a play on words worthy of only the most callous and privileged aristocrat, would have us inter the internment. It is obvious the writer is not a Japanese American. How easily he gives away the rights of others. How simple to "inter" their rights. It costs him nothing.

Let's examine some of these ideas. First, your editorial objects to "once again second-guessing the (internment) decision, upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court as a lawful exercise of wartime powers." I seem to remember many instances in which the Wall Street Journal vigorously opposed Supreme Court decisions affecting the vested interests of big business, causes in which the interests of the "We" were affected. How ironic, that when their rights are concerned, the Journal suddenly becomes a champion of the Supreme Court, accepting without question, its decisions.

Next, you object to a compensation fund. "The kind of thing that would pay \$500 to each of the heirs of the internees and make millionaires of half-a-dozen lawyers." It seems to me that at least once each week the Journal gleefully reports the merger of one multi-million dollar conglomerate with

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another. And how many lawyers and insiders become millionaires on this basis each day? We perceive no qualms of conscience from the Journal in these instances, for this is the stuff of which our interests are made. On the reparations issue, however, we are talking about their concerns, so now it is time for "crocodile" morality to show itself.

Next, we are told not to worry, "There seems little chance that these proposals will pass, not least because the family income of Japanese Americans is more than 30% above the national average. So, the Commission's hearings have been mostly symbolic, addressing the question, how guilty should WE (emphasis added) feel?"

Tenuous reasoning to support the denial of the fundamental rights of a group of Americans solely because of their ancestry. Would the writer give up his right to seek legal redress against a person who swindled him on a real estate or stock deal solely on the basis that his family income exceeded by 30%, the national average. How guilty should WE then feel for him?

The writer next speaks of the Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 in which according to the editorial, "Even though the restitution was small it reflected a genuine effort to make amends." Would the writer, should he have lost his life savings in the hypothetical stock swindle, consider his rights vindicated if the SEC saw to it that only his broker's commissions were returned to him?

Your assertion that military authorities were justified in fearing sabotage or espionage is without basis in fact. No person of Japanese ancestry in the U.S. was even charged with either crime. The thousands of renunciants thought - after being brutally stripped of their rights and imprisoned in concentration camps - that they would have a better opportunity to live free in Japan.

We next encounter a most curious comparison: "Unpleasant as the relocation camps were, the inhabitants were far safer and healthier than GIs in the jungles of New Guinea or on the beach at Iwo Jima."

It is not quite clear what the writer is intending to say by such a pernicious and irrelevant statement. Is he implying that in some perverse way, the relocated Japanese Americans caused their own suffering? I am sure had they known this might occur, that every patriotic Japanese American would never have caused himself to be relocated in the first place! On the other hand, it seems to me that the GIs were in those miserable hell-holes to defend the very rights which the writer would so lightly dismiss. By the way, Americans of Japanese descent fought in Europe and the Pacific, too.

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Perhaps the most convoluted statement of all is the following one: "Indeed, it is sometimes ARGUED (emphasis added) that relocation ironically helped to speed the postwar assimilation of Japanese Americans into the American mainstream." Where is this argued? The Harvard Club? The boardroom at Exxon? You certainly won't hear this argument by the Japanese Americans. Consider for a moment that you are an urban planner, a social architect. What better way to assimilate an ethnic or socio-economic group than by taking them from their homes, their jobs, effectively forcing them to close their businesses, causing the loss of all they have struggled for years to achieve and relocating them in some desolate camps in army barracks 500 miles from the nearest civilization. A worthy subject for a future editorial.

Finally, the writer, not having disgraced himself sufficiently to this point, has the audacity to tell us, "nearly 40 years later, it serves very little useful purpose to take this around the track once more."

It was indeed thoughtful of the writer to attempt to instruct the American conscience on just how far it should or should not go in protecting the rights of a group of its own. We should like to remind the writer the within all too recent memory a man tried to do just that for the whole world. However, he reportedly met an untimely end in a bunker in Berlin.

Thank you, but WE the American people can and will take care of our own to the point WE are satisfied justice has been done for ALL of us. We are grateful that within the scope of the American system of justice and within the American conscience there is not "They", only WE.

Yours truly,

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