

# Japanese Evacuees: Where Do They Belong

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## Eyes of Nation Focused on Oregon As State Finds Solution to Problem Of Japanese Who Want to Return Home

Editor's note: This article is presented as an effort at impartial analysis of questions raised by the return of Japanese to coastal areas. The conclusions are those of the writer.

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IT IS NOT as it was in the glamorous days of the Oregon trail, and not the way the state's chambers of commerce would have it now, but the eyes of the nation again are turned toward Oregon—this time by the clamor over return of the Japanese to coastal regions.

In its present status it can hardly be considered good advertising for the state. Even the philosophers are pressed to find virtue in a boil. In a larger sense, however, Oregon's turmoil may be of benefit to the nation, and to its own gain, as well. Oregon's prestige, growing in other fields, has a chance to be still further enhanced by intelligent leadership in solving a problem that is becoming increasingly acute over the nation.

It all began as a local matter. It does not remain local, however, when the citizens of Portland, E. I. twist the mouths when they say "Oregon." Neither is it any longer a local matter when the self-righteous in far corners of the nation beat Oregon farmers over the head with a club that is one-third idealism and two-thirds ignorance.

It is quite likely that much of the national condemnation of Oregon farmers and others is prompted by a subconscious feeling of guilt on the part of those living in communities where racial discrimination is still a festering sore—unopened and untreated. There is fire behind the smoke of southern poll tax arguments and Detroit riots. Other criticism, of course, is prompted by strong feelings for tolerance and human rights; it is only to be hoped that these critics are as candid with their home situation as they are with Oregon's.

### OREGON:

#### Hold Opposition Is Home Defense

The Japanese question in this country is much bigger than is indicated by the numbers involved—either in Japanese to be protected, farmers who claim their interests threatened, or those actuated by plain prejudice. It is as big as the combined total of all minority groups in the nation—racial, religious, economic or political.

E. B. MacNaughton, president of the First National bank, Portland, was only about half-kidding in one statement of a talk made at a Gresham meeting held recently for the purpose of counteracting anti-Japanese sentiment. He was pointing out the possible consequences of discrimination against minority groups.

"You might even turn against the bankers again," he said, "as you did in 1933 and 1931."  
In this particular case it is Oregon which is holding court in its parlor. But all parts of the nation should listen carefully to the evidence and the arguments, even though the decision may seem a foregone conclusion. There will be other trials elsewhere. Oregon should remember this in taking care what precedents are set.

In common with a great many controversies, the issues of the Japanese question are confused by the tendency of exponents to over-simplify, and the refusal of the great body of citizens to give it any thought at all, or accept any responsibility for its solution. The awakening of this group to its responsibility is an absolute requisite to any intelligent and lasting solution—and that goes for the nation as well as for Oregon.

cause they, and persons with different motives have sought to support their position with other arguments, many of which have an odor. This has not only stimulated their avowed opposition, but to a considerable extent has alienated those willing to take a reasonable view of the matter.

The Hood River case against the Japanese, which must be heard in any attempt at fair appraisal of the situation, is soberly set forth in a pamphlet issued by the Hood River American Legion post, which is better known for the ill-starred removal from its service honor roll of the names of 16 nisei serving in the United States army. They have since been repatriated.

### JAPANESE:

#### Branded as Clannish In Hood River Valley

Hood River people question the good faith of their prewar neighbors in voicing their principal grievances. They assert that the Japanese element before the war constituted a clanish, self-contained 10 per cent of the population of the valley, with reasonable evidence of outside control, an aim at domina-

quasi-land owners and financed their operations." The Hood River Japanese leader was the second Japanese in the valley to be picked up by the FBI when war began, the statement says, and is now in custody of the government at Santa Fe, N. M.

"The other type (of leader) was known as Buddhist priest, or missionary, (either Buddhist or Christian)," states the pamphlet, "their occupation was to build Buddhist temples and community houses. The operations of the Black Dragon society and general undercover work came from these temples. Many of the so-called priests were officers of the Japanese army and navy."

"The community houses were for rural communities. They were used for the occasional meetings of adults and the almost daily (afternoon) assembly of grade school children. These meetings were called language schools. They taught Shinto, the Japanese way of life, and worship of the living descendants of the sun god, the emperor, from earliest childhood. American-born Japanese were carefully screened from the American way of life. The public schools had them a few hours a day, five days a week, for nine

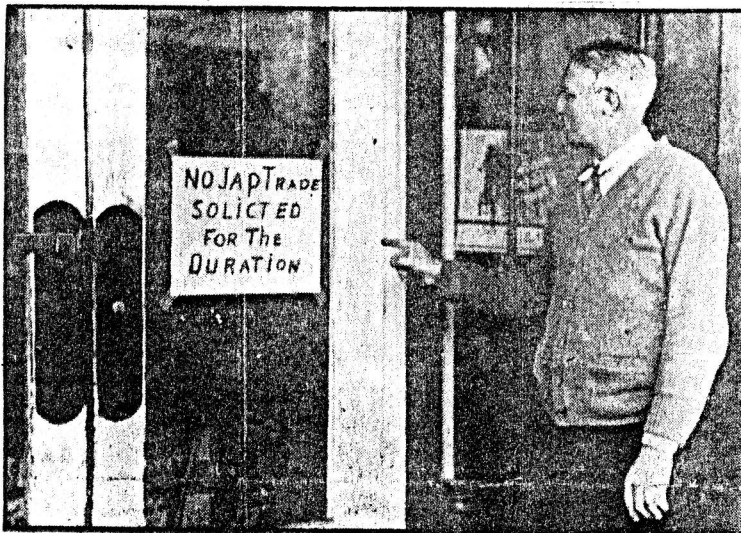
months a year, but paid Shinto teachers and Shinto parents had them all the other days and hours. . . . The result of careful supervision in finance and indoctrination was a shock to the people of the Pacific coast states after Pearl Harbor.

"The above should have been the story of a valuable group of citizens, but for their own practice of racial segregation. They, not the white people, enforced it. They are a pleasant, courteous people, and, if they had so desired, could have had a large part in the civil and social life of the community. . . . Here in several of our rural schools the Japanese constituted a large majority. Despite this fact, no discrimination has in the past been practiced against them. They were eligible to participate, and many of them did participate, in all the school programs. They were fairly graded in their school work, and many of them were tops or near tops in grade and high school. Their withdrawal from social life of the community began of their own volition at about high school age."

In defending their position against alleged Japanese encroachment, the Hood River people put into figures what the Irish have always meant when

they speak of the Ould Sod. Hood River valley is approximately eight miles wide and 20 miles long.

"Now just what are we fighting for?" demands the pamphlet. "Well, just for the most modernized rural community in the world. . . . The National Electric Light association has rated us highest because: 95 per cent of our rural homes have electric lights; safe water from municipal pipelines is available to all rural homes; we have more



Soon after controversy over the evacuees broke into the open, signs directed against Japanese-Americans who may be returning to their former homes in and near Gresham appeared in a number of business establishments there. Ralph Hannan (above) posted one in his store.

tion of the valley, and a system of indoctrination which balked the efforts of public schools to Americanize the younger generation. An equivalent situation here would mean some 35,000 Japanese living in the Portland city limits.

"About 45 years ago," reads the background material in the Hood River pamphlet, "the first Japanese came here as common laborers. Shortly thereafter they began buying land, and 'picture brides' were imported. In 1923, purchase of land by alien-born Japanese was prohibited by state law. Very shortly a detour around this law was devised. Land was bought for minor and infant Japanese. By almost annual child-bearing the 'picture brides' furnished a broad highway to ownership of the best lands on the west coast."

"About 40 years ago," the pamphlet continues, "two types of Japanese appeared to direct and control all persons of Japanese ancestry."  
One of these, says the pamphlet, was the bankers and business leaders, who "selected the

### COMMUNITY:

#### Given High Rating By Federal Agency

"Here in Hood River," in a very few years, the Japanese colony grew to almost exactly 10 per cent of the population. They owned 2898 acres, 7.8 per cent of total farm land in Hood River county; 1596 acres in orchards, 15.7 per cent of total orchards; and 241 acres in truck and potatoes, 76 per cent of the total. However, they owned 40 per cent of the Bartlett pear production in this county, and the final check-up showed they owned 20 per cent in dollar value, of all farm production in 1941. It is an astonishing total. The Japanese do not have the highest percentage production; their man-hours per unit of value is much higher than that of other farmers. Their good showing is the result of careful supervision in purchase of the best land only, the unflinching industry of men, women and children.

miles of hard roads per acre of cultivation than any other farm community; we have complete and adequate irrigation for all farm acreage. And finally, we have achieved co-operative control for the sale of our farm produce. Did the Japanese do this? They did not. It was done entirely without them."

The other side of the current argument is not given its full significance if it is called "the case for the Japanese." Actually it is a case for tolerance, for observance of human and constitutional rights, a case for the preservation of this country's democratic form of government. The fine Hood River valley community—and other communities where return of the Japanese is meeting opposition—could never have grown and prospered without the principles enunciated in this case.

### FARMERS:

#### Opposition Held As Home Defense

The Hood River and Gresham farmers have given many the impression that their opposition to Japanese is nothing but maliciously selfish race discrimination. Actually, the farmers do not consider that to be at all the case. They maintain that they are simply defending their homes against encroachment of a tightly knit, highly organized foreign group which, in the past, has made slight effort toward Americanization. Of course, they are not talking about the many Japanese who have taken part in Portland community life in the past, and will do so again.

The best that critics have had to say for the farmers was that their motives are economic—not patriotic. In this respect, of course, the farmers are no different from labor unions or the National Association of Manufacturers. People usually do not feel it necessary to apologize for looking out for themselves economically.

# Where Do They Belong



In support of their arguments, persons favoring return of Japanese point to loyalty of many in the armed services, such as Sgt. Masumi Yoshinari (above) of Portland, who is shown receiving battlefield promotion to second lieutenant from Gen. Mark Clark in Italy. (AP photo.)

## MEETINGS:

### Held at Gresham To Discuss Topic

Most of its points were covered by the speakers at the Gresham meeting previously mentioned, which was held in the high school auditorium there, and attended by approximately 600 persons. Called by the citizens' committee, headed by Rev. John L. Magoon, pastor of the Bethel Baptist church at Gresham, this meeting followed shortly after two sessions at the same place by the Oregon Property Owners' league, Inc., an anti-Japanese organization, both of which drew large crowds.

The possible ultimate effect of minority discrimination was emphasized at this meeting by Mr. MacNaughton.

"Those who look forward to postwar dislocations of our national economy are greatly concerned about the possibility that public hysteria may produce a scapegoat, as Hitler used the Jews," he declared. "If this should happen, it will not be the Japanese alone, because they are too small a minority to have any apparent significance."

"It may be the Negroes or the Filipinos, or both, if racial hatreds are stimulated. It may be the Jews or the Catholics, or both, if religious prejudices are inflamed. It may be the mechanics or the farmers, or employers or labor unions, if industrial lines are drawn. It may be the 'haves' against the 'have-nots' if economic distinctions are made."

The Portland banker presented the Gresham group's proposal for a law, or constitutional amendment, to exclude Japanese as an attack on fundamental Americanism.

### MacNAUGHTON:

#### Voiced His Views On Vital Problem

"It must be apparent that if it is proposed to enact a law by which persons of Japanese ancestry may be excluded from this or any other area of this state or of the United States, such a law would plainly violate both the state and national constitutions," he stated. "But the point I make is not only that it would violate constitutional limitations; it would attack the fundamental underlying value of the very thing which its advocates would intend to protect and preserve—the American way of life."

Charles A. Sprague, Salem former governor of Oregon and president of the Oregon Council of Churches, struck at one of the mainstays of the plans for barring return of Japanese, which is that their present dislocation makes this the best time ever for uprooting them. He did this by reducing the question to its smallest, most elemental component.

"The Japanese were evacuated from their homes as a measure of war necessity," he asserted. "When that necessity no longer exists, there no longer is any logical reason for keeping them away."

Dr. Norman Coleman of Lewis and Clark college, who has traveled in Japan and has had experience with Japanese students here, said that young Japanese quickly make adjustments, and tend to become good citizens. This, it may be noted, is admitted by Hood River people, who claim that this tendency was thwarted in their community by outside control. Both Dr. Coleman and Mr. MacNaughton asserted that the Japanese is just as anxious for high return for his effort as is the white man, and both discounted the validity of the "low standard of living" argument.

Another principal speaker at this Gresham meeting was Harold S. Fister, Seattle, area supervisor for the war relocation authority, which has done a good enough and bad enough job with a hard and thankless task that catches brick-bats from several directions.

Fister pointed out to the group that the army and the United States supreme court have laid down the law on return of Japanese to the coast, and pledged WRA's aid in the ensuing movement of the evacuees to their former homes. This, of course, is only an extension of what has been a major part of the WRA's job from the beginning—relocation of persons of Japanese ancestry. WRA representatives, on occasion, have been less than tactful in dealing with farmers, but on the whole they have been simply doing the job laid out for them.

The WRA actually is entitled to kudos—not dead cats—from Hood River and Gresham farmers. Of the 107,000 Japanese evacuated from coastal homes, some 40,000 have been relocated outside the western defense command—a high percentage of these being scattered throughout the east and midwest. Others

still in relocation centers will go to the interior, rather than return to the coast. Hood River farmers all along have been willing to settle for wider distribution of the Japanese. Most Gresham farmers felt the same until they were recently sold the idea of a constitutional amendment to expel all Japanese from the United States, which, some observers have said, probably will help the promoters more than the movement.

The WRA, from the very beginning, has shown considerably better over-all understanding of the Japanese question on the west coast than have many others expressing opinions. Segregation of racial or national minorities has long been recognized as out-of-line with melting pot principles, to say the least. When it became necessary to evacuate Japanese for security reasons, it was recognized as a golden opportunity to work for assimilation of a racial minority. From a relocation center to freedom in the midwest was a favor, not a hardship. (No Kansas jokes, please.) The WRA has made the present problem much smaller than it would have been without relocation activities of the last three years.

### POLICE:

#### Say Japanese Observe Laws

There should be no tongue in cheek at this view of Japanese relocation. Individual Japanese have proven their good citizenship qualities time and again. As the Hood River pamphlet points out, they are a "pleasant and courteous people." Peace officers say that members of this group are among those causing officers the least trouble. Distributed over the nation, they are being well received in virtually all localities. This distribution is of benefit to the Japanese themselves, as well as alleviating what has proven a local irritant in many parts of the west.

None of this, it must be emphasized, argues in favor of coercive action against returning Japanese. It does not even argue in favor of Hood River's action in forming a corporation to buy land held by the Japanese.



Hiroshi Sunamoto was first American-born Japanese to return to Hillsboro after lifting of ban in coastal area. He is pictured receiving rifles taken from him after Pearl Harbor from Sheriff J. W. Connell of Washington county.

There is a measure of coercion in the sales talk. But, from this distance, neither does it argue against Hood River's idea of a proper solution to its local problem of long standing. Portlanders cannot be sure what their own attitude would be toward any 35,000-person group that resisted assimilation. As long as Hood River's action is within legal limits, and in reasonably good taste, the best judgment will be that which takes account of the cause, as well as the effect. He is rash, at best, who proclaims that he would be ever so much holier than a Hood River farmer if he were in the latter's place.

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PREVIOUS

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the books as this section's share in the distribution of a racial group over the nation. There will always be some Japanese on the west coast, just as there will always be Negroes, Methodists, Jews, Italians—and a few republicans. It will not be as difficult to live with them as we are told by folks who thump their chests and point to lurid posters.

The Japanese question thus far has been argued principally by two groups—those who oppose return of the evacuees, and those who vigorously assert the right of the evacuees to go where they please. The measure of justification for the stand of Hood River and Gresham farmers is obscured and colored by their admitted self-interest. The judgment of the other group is biased by the fervor of its laudable defense of human rights and constitutional guarantees. Each is fighting for what it believes to be right, and neither can be blamed for the fact that only the extremes are represented.

The fault for this condition lies with an estimated 80 to 90 per cent of the people—those who "simply cannot be bothered." That goes not only for Portland and Oregon, but for the whole United States, which is daily pounding closer to a race crisis of many phases. We do not have to go far for a startling parallel. When bombs fell on Pearl Harbor we remembered our bored yawns at warnings against letting national defense facilities fall to dangerous levels. Must there be a racial Pearl Harbor?

It was this large group that Mr. MacNaughton was addressing, rather than simply the 600 persons in the Gresham high school auditorium, when he

made one of the most cogent observations of his talk. It was in the nature of a plea to the great mass of comfort-seeking citizens who will have to give the race problem serious thought before it is solved.

"No man in this modern world," he declared, "can escape participating in this adventure of making society stable and successful. It is not error, per se, but complacency in error, which has forever bedeviled the life of man, and it always will while we allow it to prevail."

We do not have to let more Japanese into the country in the postwar period. But those who are here must be considered as humans; and those who were born here, as citizens. Many of their ancestors were brought here originally for American exploitation of the low standard of living that is now deplored.

Let there be some program of regulation and education which will protect their rights and advance their Americanism and at the same time protect the American rights of those with whom they compete. Broaden this program to include all minorities who might attract the attention of the short-sighted. Let it be accomplished and furthered by a growing awakening that tolerance is a prime requisite of Americanism; that emotional fury is no sign of either patriotism or common sense.

All this may be a large order. But ours is a country founded on great principle. Part of the principle is that we must share the responsibility for preserving both our liberties and our standard of living. Those who deny or shirk their share of this responsibility are inviting disaster at home as we strive for peace over the world.