

July 2, 1979

New York Nichibei  
260 W. Broadway  
New York, NY 10013

Dear Taxi and Friends:

May I express my thanks to you for your welcome and friendship to me during our meeting at the Lotus Eaters on June 29th? Although I was not able to enjoy the fine food as much as I would have liked to -- I had so much to say -- I did enjoy your company. Your generous contribution to help defray the cost of my trip to New York is, of course, very helpful and deeply appreciated. But I must confess that I was disappointed and perplexed by the end result of our deliberations. May I explain? May I persuade a little more?

I think I am correct in concluding that none of you supports the JACL's Commission approach to redress. This is heartening. But you also wish not to support the National Council for Japanese American Redress' approach for direct redress. You want the National Council to raise the amount of payment to \$50,000 per individual and to keep it as a flat amount regardless of length of stay in the camps. Since the National Council's proposal has already been submitted to two members of Congress and since members of the National Council have already given their support to the proposal, it is really not subject to alteration. Therefore, it seems that you will not support the National Council. What then will you do?

I sincerely apologize for my not having supplied an adequate argument for the National Council's bill. I accepted the original JACL proposal for \$25,000. I do not recall ever seeing any criticism of that amount as being not enough. It's been around for at least one year. I think it is not unfair to point out that the argument to increase this to \$50,000 is somewhat tardy. Someone in New York-New England could have publicly expressed ~~their~~ opposition some months ago.

The change from a flat sum of \$25,000 to a variable sum which would average around \$25,000 was made to allow the payment to fit the severity of the crime. This is a long-standing practice of the courts. Are you opposed to the practice? Or do you truly believe that the person who escaped camp entirely or was in camp for a short time suffered equally with those who were there for two or three years? Which is it? I doubt it is the former. If the latter, I am truly mystified. A year in confinement is not as bad as two or three -- at least, that's how our criminal justice system works.

The attempt to equate this action with a civil suit or wage contract negotiations is dangerous. I think it is extremely important for us to state precisely what we consider to be adequate redress for the injustices experienced. We are defining redress. We are stating our will. We are not factoring in the probable Congressional response. (This factoring is what got us the Commission.) Maybe Congress will attempt to pare it down. Maybe not. I submit that despite our wise saying about what Congress ~~will~~ will do, we really do not know.



Also, consider the proportionality of the reparations for the Holocaust, some 45 billion, to reparations for American concentration camps, some three billion. Doesn't that seem about right?

I'm not sure where you stand on the question of Nikkei control of the National Council. I think I stated my position quite clearly. This is an issue for all Americans. The National Council will function democratically. Each member will be able to deliberate and vote equally. I don't believe there is any magic or principle at stake in this procedure. We are going to get this bill passed only by receiving overwhelming non-Nikkei support. If you reject this strategy, you'll have to reject the National Council.

But I urge you to reconsider your position. The National Council has created the alternative to the JACL's Commission. We've worked on this longer than anyone else. We've consulted more people than anyone else. We've taken the initiative. We've done our homework. We've made the commitment. Certainly, we're not perfect. Our bill is not perfect. It will evolve as the years go by. But New York is absolutely vital. We need a National Council here. If not you, then someone else. Why not you?

Peace,

*W. Hohri*

William Hohri  
National Council for Japanese American Redress  
4717 N. Albany  
Chicago, IL 60625