



National Council for Japanese American Redress

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VOLUME XI, NUMBER 4
JULY 1989

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or more; some remain anonymous.
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Dear Friends,

I had turned my letter to our newsletter editor, Eddie Sato, when I learned, through a leak, that the House Appropriations Committee may be considering a bare \$20 million for redress payments in the 1990 budget. The decisions of the HAC's sub-committees are embargoed (to be kept from the public) until the full committee meets on July 27. But this leak was enough to make me ask Eddie if I could re-write this letter. Twenty million dollars is unacceptable. It will provide payments for 1,000 persons, most of whom will have died.

The 1990 budget may be a moment of truth for us. I feel the redress movement has been an affirmation of our democratic institutions. We trusted the courts to act impartially and in accordance to our constitution and our laws. We trusted the Congress and President to act responsibly and to fulfill the laws they enacted. The process has been long. The first proposal for redress emerged in 1970. The Japanese American Citizens League enacted its redress proposal in 1978. NCJAR was formed in May 1979. It has been arduous. We, in NCJAR, have raised well over \$300,000, hired attorneys and lobbyists. We extracted tens of thousands of primary documents to buttress our claim. We filed a class action lawsuit that went into the U.S. Supreme Court. We have done dozens of radio, television, and print media interviews, written articles and letters-to-the-editor, and appeared before congressional committees and community meetings. All premised on our belief that the process works. We now face the potential question: does it work for us?

My faith in a government of, by, and for the people is as solid and as shaky as my faith in people. Our government is as mortal and flawed as we are. We are reminded of this mortality by Watergate, Iran-Contra, our three-trillion-dollar debt, and the emerging scandal in H.U.D. As if to punctuate this, the President and Congress seek to elevate government, through constitutional amendment, to being sacred by protecting the U.S. flag from desecration. The gods must be howling with laughter. One cannot desecrate,

Continued

An Issue for All Americans

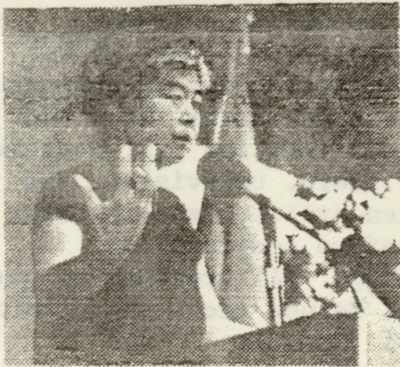
Continued DEAR FRIENDS

"take away the sacredness" from, that which is plainly secular and mortal. (At first I thought we might gather a party on the White House lawn at which each participant burns a U.S. flag to say that all is not lost for the flag: it can serve as an alternative form of energy. But on reflection, burning the flag is an act of separation and destruction. I wish neither to separate from nor destroy the United States.)

Despite its many failures, our government still works. I would understand persons who withdraw from the struggle from disappointment. Some members of the NCJAR board left after our lawsuit was killed by the U.S. Supreme Court. Our ranks in the redress movement have thinned. NCJAR's financial support has diminished. But despite this potential for defeat, the democratic process remains open. I believe we need to continue to affirm the process with our active participation in it. Battles remain to be fought in the House and Senate. (The gods must be amazed that a group that has been exiled and detained by their government should persist in affirming their right to have their grievances heard and redressed.) NCJAR will continue as long as we need to and you, dear friends, provide sufficient support.

Peace,

William Hohri



P.S. Joy Kogawa was in Chicago (June 15-18) to represent Canada's cultural program. She made the tour of bookstores and libraries and read from *Obasan* and her poetry. I still think *Obasan* is the great Nisei novel. It's a classic. *Obasan* is a moving, beautifully written account of the wartime exile and detention of Japanese Canadians. Get it and read it. [See literature: page 6.]

Pictures taken at
Printers Row Book Fair
BURNHAM PARK
Sunday, June 18, 1989



■ The following letter dated June 30, 1989 was printed in the Friday, July 14, 1989 NEW YORK TIMES.

Japanese-Americans still await redress

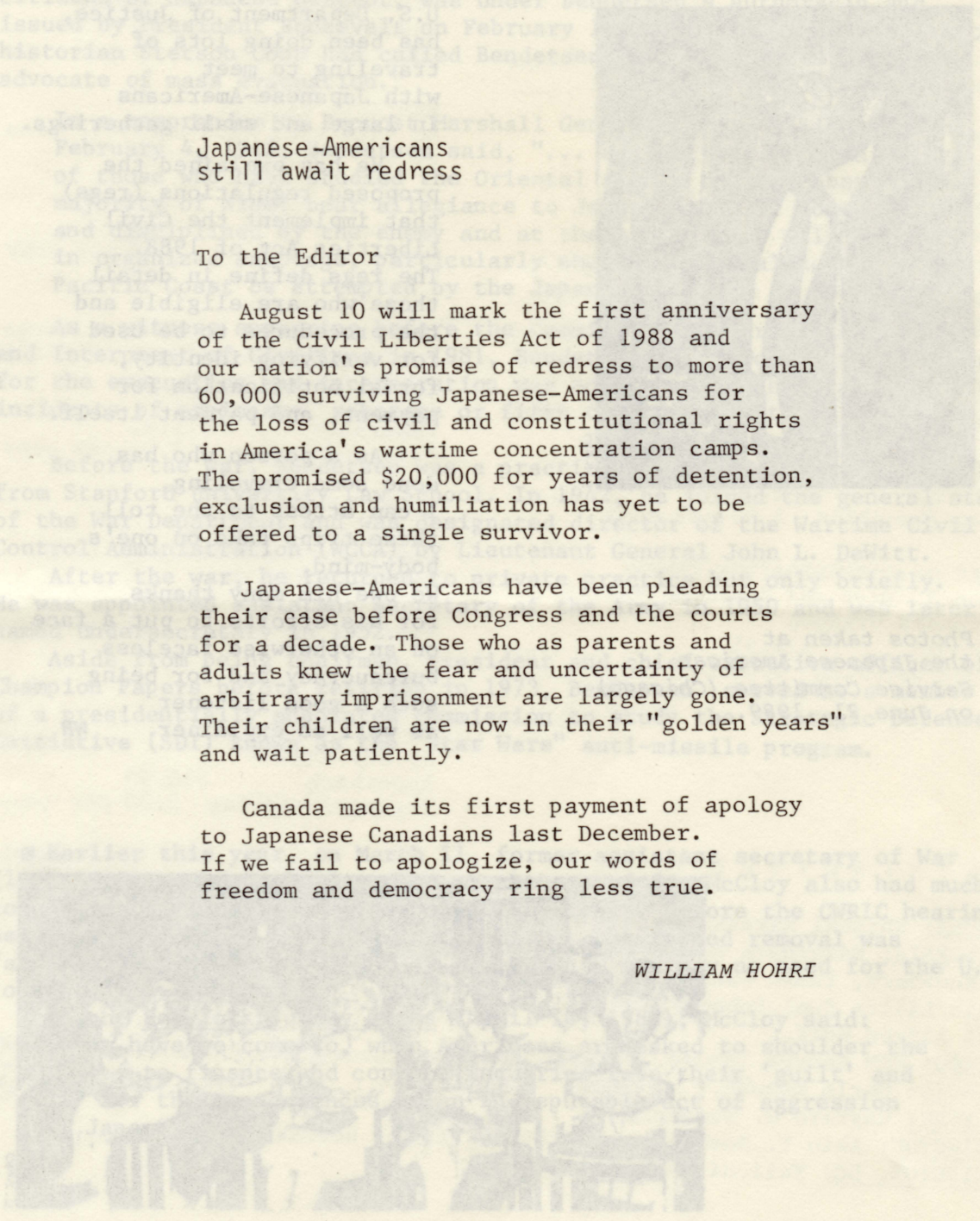
To the Editor

August 10 will mark the first anniversary of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 and our nation's promise of redress to more than 60,000 surviving Japanese-Americans for the loss of civil and constitutional rights in America's wartime concentration camps. The promised \$20,000 for years of detention, exclusion and humiliation has yet to be offered to a single survivor.

Japanese-Americans have been pleading their case before Congress and the courts for a decade. Those who as parents and adults knew the fear and uncertainty of arbitrary imprisonment are largely gone. Their children are now in their "golden years" and wait patiently.

Canada made its first payment of apology to Japanese Canadians last December. If we fail to apologize, our words of freedom and democracy ring less true.

WILLIAM HOHRI



NEWS newsletter
editor: Shige Sato
Doris Sato

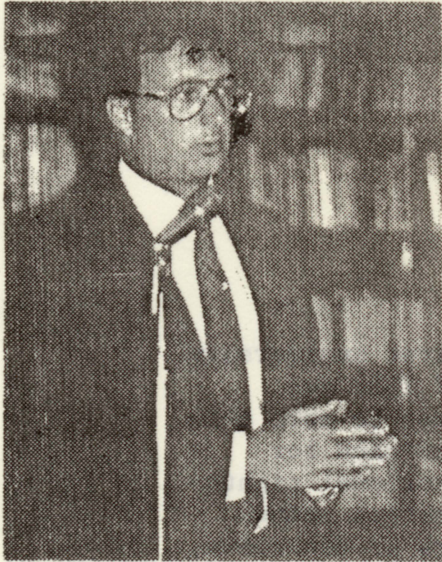
A busy administrator

Robert Bratt, the administrator of the Office of Redress Administration, U.S. Department of Justice, has been doing lots of traveling to meet with Japanese-Americans in large and small gatherings.

He has explained the proposed regulations (regs) that implement the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. The regs define in detail those who are eligible and the procedures to be used for verifying identity, formal notification for payment, and payment itself.

As a person who has done some traveling, I can attest to the toll these trips take on one's body-mind.

We owe him many thanks for his efforts to put a face on an otherwise faceless bureaucracy and for being such a good listener as well as explainer. WH



CLAS

Photos taken at the Japanese American Service Committee (Chicago) on June 21, 1989.



CLAS

KARL R.
BENDETSSEN

On June 28, Karl R. Bendetsen (81) died at his home of a heart attack. It was Bendetsen who supervised the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast to concentration camps during World War II.

Executive Order 9066, which authorized the forced removal of American citizens of Japanese descent, was under Bendetsen's authorship and issued by President Roosevelt on February 19, 1942. Former chief military historian Stetson Conn had called Bendetsen "the most industrious advocate of mass evacuation."

In a memorandum to Provost Marshall General Allen Gullion dated February 4, 1942, Bendetsen said, "... by far, the vast majority of those who have studied the Oriental assert that a substantial majority of Nisei bear allegiance to Japan, are well controlled and disciplined by the enemy and at the proper time will engage in organized sabotage, particularly should a raid along the Pacific Coast be attempted by the Japanese..."

As a witness appearing before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in 1981, Bendetsen testified that the decision for the evacuation and incarceration was not taken on the basis of actual incidents of espionage, sabotage or fifth column activity.

Before the war, Bendetsen was a practicing attorney, having graduated from Stanford University Law School. In 1942, he joined the general staff of the War Department and was designated director of the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) by Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt.

After the war, he returned to private practice but only briefly. He was appointed assistant secretary of the Army in 1950 and was later named undersecretary in 1952.

Aside from being chairman, president and chief executive officer of Champion Papers before retiring in 1973, Bendetsen served as a member of a presidentially appointed commission to study the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) known as the "Star Wars" anti-missile program.

■ Earlier this year, on March 11, former assistant secretary of War (1941-1945), John J. McCloy died at the age of 93. McCloy also had much to do with the exclusion of Japanese Americans. Before the CWRIC hearings held in Washington, D.C., he insisted that the forced removal was "a relocation program and not an internment" and saw no need for the U.S. to apologize.

In the New York Sunday Times (April 10, 1983), McCloy said: "What have we come to, when Americans are asked to shoulder the blame, to finance and conduct inquiries into their 'guilt' and pay for the consequences of an indisputable act of aggression by Japan?"

NCJAR newsletter

editor: Eddie Sato
Doris Sato

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