

January 7, 1942

THE FOLLOWING IS THE STATEMENT RECEIVED FROM MR. MIKE MASAOKA

"Pursuant to the recommendations made by Mr. Allen Blaisdell, the chairman, I am herewith submitting a short statement concerning the various problems which confront the American citizens of Japanese ancestry and their immigrant resident alien parent group.

I. Business

While most of the Japanese shops, stores, and business establishments have opened after being closed by the government, we find that it is almost impossible for these stores to continue operations because of the fact that the public-at-large will not patronize them. Reports from various sections in San Francisco indicate that some business^{es} have fallen off 90% in comparison to the same period last year, while most of the stores estimate their losses at about 50%. We are daily confronted with the question as to whether it would be better from a long-time point of view to liquidate immediately or to try to struggle on for the time being. With the prospects looming as dark as they are as to their having increased patronage, it is almost safe to predict that within a few months most of the Japanese stores must close. We are wondering what procedure to follow regarding this matter, for, even should relief be available to these folk, temporary expedients of this nature are not the proper solution.

II. Insurance.

Due to the present war, we find that practically all insurance companies have cancelled their fire and property damage insurance policies on all real property owned or leased by either American citizens of Japanese extraction or by Japanese nationals. Moreover, we find that no casualty company will underwrite Japanese nationals on their automobiles. Even the American citizens find it difficult to obtain collision, public liability, and property damage coverage for their private automobiles. A few of the "board" companies will write American citizens but they insist upon a "mark-up" or "write-up" of some 50% to 100% on the premium. Too, we find that life insurance companies will not permit Japanese nationals to be the beneficiaries of any policy. This works a hardship on the older members of the immigrant group because many of the old policies do not permit the changing of beneficiaries without considerable "red tape," if at all. Again, in the case of a husband and wife, both of whom are Japanese nationals, who have no children, the problem becomes rather bewildering. More tragic than any of the above, however, is that concerning trucks which are owned and operated by American citizens of Japanese ancestry. These fleets of trucks are used in hauling fruit and produce from the farm to the market. A special type of truck and equipment is needed as well as specialized labor. The California Railroad Commission which contracts with these trucking groups for the hauling of produce is prohibited by law from granting these contracts to any person who cannot show proof of insurance coverage on his truck. At the present writing, as far as we can ascertain, no company will write these trucks. This means that valuable equipment of a specialized nature as well as specialized labor is being wasted to say nothing of the great hardships worked upon the agricultural sections of this state in which the Japanese predominate. As a measure of National Defense, because food has been said to be the second line of defense, it appears that some method of solving this problem must be worked out if this state is to meet its agricultural output quota for the coming year. I have contacted the administrative assistants to the California State Commissioner of Insurance and they have suggested the possibility of an "assigned risk pool" in which the companies would divide the various Japanese risks who are legitimately entitled to insurance protection. We feel that if this system, or some other suitable system, could be worked out, that a great problem in National Defense would be solved.

III. Filipino relations.

This problem may be broken into two divisions: (1) international relations, and (2) agricultural cooperation. The former relates to the possibility of race riots and murders in communities in which there are a considerable number of Filipino and Japanese residing together. We have requested the governor as well as the sheriffs of the various counties to provide adequate police protection as well as calling upon the various Filipino leaders to urge their fellow countrymen to refrain from these acts of violence. In spite of these precautions, we find that murders are still continuing, as well as minor race troubles of a physical nature between the two races. As to the second part of this problem most Filipinos refuse to work for Japanese employers, regardless of whether they are citizens or nationals. This has created a tremendous labor shortage as well as a relief problem for those Filipinos who are dependent upon farm work for a livelihood. In the interest of National Defense as well as racial comity, it is imperative that this problem of race relations be ironed out immediately.

IV. Information Dissemination.

On various government regulations and orders relating to the conduct of the Japanese during the present war, we find conflicting interpretations from various governmental agencies on the same subject, as well as from governmental agents in various sections of the country. We find that often times the various local divisions of the government seem confused as to the general orders and that even the men within the same department take opposite views relative to certain regulations. Not only is this true, but often time the authorities in other sections of the state adopt an entirely different attitude. Until some central and authoritative body is set up which will uniformly interpret the rules and regulations, it will be impossible for us to comply with all regulations as speedily as the government often times requires. Moreover, the very fact that our organs for the dissemination of vital information are very few and inadequate in number, it is almost impossible to do justice to the government's request. It is our suggestion that the government be requested to send to the National Headquarters of the Japanese American Citizens League all matters relative to interpretations and regulations. Inasmuch as we are the only national organization of American citizens of Japanese ancestry, with some 60 chapters and 20,000 members in every significant Japanese community in this country, it is our contention that our organization is in a much better position to disseminate valuable information than any other organ or medium or organization.

V. Conflict in authorities.

Occasionally, we find that the State and Federal Governments do not agree as to the proper procedure relative to the conduct of the Japanese nationals in this war. A case in point pertains to the transfer of automobiles from Japanese nationals to American citizens. The Federal Government, through its Federal Reserve Bank, Foreign Funds Control Division, provides that under circular No. 199, all Japanese nationals who have resided continuously in this country since the 17th of June, 1940, may transfer property from one to another or to a citizen. The State of California, Motor Vehicles Department, specifically prohibits such a transfer inasmuch as it will not permit Japanese nationals to transfer their registration of automobile ownership from one national to another or to a citizen. Inasmuch as Japanese nationals cannot receive insurance coverage on their automobiles, it is almost imperative that they transfer their cars to an American citizen, as their sons and daughters. This is prohibited and, of course, works a hardship upon those Japanese nationals who desire to sell their automobiles in order to obtain sufficient funds to meet other living expenses.

VI. Traveling

The latest order of the Attorney General's office restricts the traveling of Japanese nationals to the community in which they live. Before they may leave that community, they must apply in person at least one week before they contemplate such a trip to the United States Attorney's office. The rigid interpretations of this ruling works a tremendous hardship for those Japanese who desire to cross from one community to another to see friends or to do business. This is especially true in the San Francisco Bay Area where Japanese would like to cross the bridge to visit with friends and relatives. Under the interpretation, a friendly visit would not be deemed as "pressing business," and, therefore, would be prohibited. Further, the applications for permit to travel must be filed for each individual trip. This means that traveling salesmen and insurance solicitors as well as reverends and pastors will be subjected to many humiliations and inconveniences not only in traveling along the way but also in applying for these permits.

VII. Fishing.

Seafoods are necessary as a matter of National Defense as well as for a balanced diet. American citizens of Japanese ancestry own and operate many of the boats used in commercial fishing. The head of Naval Operations in this district has refused permission to American citizens of Japanese ancestry to go fishing. This means that the only means of livelihood which these young men know is destroyed as well as the people at large in this country suffering from a lack of seafoods.

The above are some of the more pressing problems which confront the Japanese community at this time. We request your serious consideration of them and trust that you will be able to help us work out some solution for them."

Mike Masaoko,
National Secretary and
Field Executive,
Japanese American Citizens League.

arq