

Excuse, Please; But What's In Those Jap Text-Books?

By HENRY McLEMORE

LOS ANGELES, Saturday, Feb. 7.—Slant my eyes, bow my legs, and hammer me down. I'm turning Japanese.

Two weeks in California have convinced me that the only happy people out here in time of war are the sons of Nippon. Everyone is being so kind and so considerate. From Washington, Mr. Biddle does everything but cook the rice for the lovely ones.

The police and military authorities make it a point to see that the Japanese are given every consideration. Americans don't get that out here any more than they do in your home town. An American must keep his "dukes" up, keep swinging from the floor, to see that he isn't buffeted around.

But not the Japanese. Since the delightful and charming attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese in America have enjoyed a new and comfortable status. They are pointed out. They are enjoying civil liberties they never heard of before.

IN case you think I'm jesting, let us consider the matter of Japanese language schools.

Before Pearl Harbor, there were 248 such schools in Southern California. The schools had a combined attendance of 13,000. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese sponsors (these schools are completely apart from the California educational system) closed the schools. Everyone said, "How nice, how patriotic of the Japanese." Everyone in California was very proud of this voluntary response.

But that was a few weeks ago. The smoke has died down from the bombs in Honolulu. The American dead have been buried. The treachery has become a slogan.

So, what have the Japanese done? Nothing, except to politely try to open those damn schools once more.

THEY have contacted United States Attorney William Fleet Palmer.

William Fleet Palmer was very stern with the Hashimuro togos. In a hard-bitten, mean, nasty statement he was quoted as telling them: "This office certainly will not lend any encouragement to the reopening of the Japanese schools."

This hardly seems fair. This brutal answer to our charming little friends shocks me. Here the Japs are doing their best to take their juvenile American-born offspring and teach them that Emperor Hirohito is the leading citizen of the world, a near god, and completely without wrong.

Who are we, as Americans, to discourage this sort of thing? The fact that we are at war with Japan and that our national existence depends upon beating Japan certainly furnishes no excuse for intolerance.

AFTER all, the books that are taught in these schools are printed in Japan. My knowledge of Japanese is very slight; so slight in fact that I can't read a word of the stuff.

But even to such a casual student of the language as myself, it is obvious that these books, while they may not openly rap our United States, bend over backwards (as far as books can bend over backwards) to keep from putting in a plug for this country.

Even the pictures don't give the United States a break. You won't find Mount Vernon or Valley Forge or Belleau Wood or Dewey returning from Manila in there. No, sir! You get a load of pint-sized mountains full of snow, a mess of fans, and two or three potential fifth-columnists arranging chrysanthemums in a vase.

The schools have nothing to do with the California educational system, as I said before. The children who attend them are American citizens, actually, and from 9 until 3 attend the regular public schools; which are among the best in the country.

But they go straight from the American schools to the Japanese schools. At 3:30, 19,000 little American Sons of Heaven whip into the Jap classes and concentrate on forgetting the American way of life they learned earlier in the day.

BUT, thank Heaven, the government is not intolerant. Everyone seems to have made up his mind that this country is going to remain a democracy, even at the risk of having it run by a bunch of rickshaw operators.

Sop, hand me down my rice cakes.

I am off to break sukiyaki with one of the most intelligent, earnest, well-educated (in California's Japanese language schools) saboteurs that it has been my displeasure to know.