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U.S. COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF
CIVILIANS

SEATTLE HEARING

SEATTLE CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE AUDITORIUM

1701 Broadway

Wednesday, September 9, 1981

Testimony of Mayor Charles Royer

Good morning, I am Mayor Charles Royer.

On behalf of the City of Seattle, I am happy to welcome you to our fine city. Although your main preoccupation will be on gathering testimony about the effects of wartime relocation on the Japanese-American in the Pacific Northwest and the Aleuts of Alaska, I hope you will have some time to see our beautiful city.

It is appropriate that the Commission has chosen to hold this hearing in Seattle. We are extremely proud of the contribution Japanese-Americans have made to the history and quality of life in this community. Besides all of its obvious physical

attractions, ours is a city which also prides itself on its decent and active political climate and humane and caring populace.

In a terrible period in our history, the climate was not so kind.

Our society--its leadership and the general population--took an ugly and wrong turn.

Out of fear, out of anger, we denied certain of our citizens the most basic of rights.

It is a debt which, in some form, we will pay forever. Not just in money, but we pay in the emotional, cultural, social, human and political currency as well.

In a time of stress, we made the most cruel mistake, and its burden will be a heavy one for all of us who look back on it over the next few days.

But looking back will ultimately free us. Only in remembering can we determine that no such aberration would occur again. Only the truth shall set us free. Today you will hear some of the most moving testimony. The testimony will describe the lingering social, psychological and economic damages which remain from those events 40 years ago.

Some of the testimony, I am sure, will be most poignant and at times very emotional. I know you realize that this is not an easy thing to do for many of those who were interned. Years and years of painful memories regarding this sorry episode have been buried in

the darkest corners of the Japanese-American psyche. Just coming to a decision to finally speak out about the effects and experiences of their uniquely horrible experience is a difficult process.

The deprivation of civil liberties--the substandard living conditions in the camps--the economic losses of Americans who invested in the American dream and had it wrenched from them by their fellow citizens--all of these injustices cry out for simple, definable steps which will insure that this nation will never again allow these things to occur.

All that I have learned about this period in our history, and all that I intuitively feel, lead me to believe that some sort of financial closure should be made to this sorrowful chapter.

People lost property and were never appropriately compensated. Families were split up, people detained absent the protections we're so proud of.

We must bring closure to this issue, and some form of financial reparation is a good way of doing it.

It is appropriate, fair and necessary. It is also very difficult, and your task is a complicated one. But I urge you to do now what is necessary to right a terrible wrong.

You should not think of doing this only for Americans of Japanese ancestry, but for all Americans. In looking back today, all of us will feel the pain and the shame of that period when our own decent system failed.