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CHURCH COUNCIL OF GREATER SEATTLE
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Church Council of Greater Seattle Testimony:

Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians

September 1981

I am the Reverend Dr. William B. Cate, President-Director of the Church Council of Greater Seattle. I am here to speak in behalf of the Church Council of Greater Seattle, which is an ecumenical church council of the Greater Seattle area comprised of 300 Catholic, Protestant, Oriental Orthodox, including black and Asian congregations/parishes, coming from some twenty denominational judicatories.

In 1942 leaders in the predecessor organization of the Church Council, the Greater Seattle Council of Churches, protested the gross injustice of the wartime relocation and internment of Japanese-American people. Today, 39 years later, I restate our growing sense of shame as a Church Council in what our nation has done to a minority group of our people, and the need for dramatic action to demonstrate our great regret and to give some modicum of redress.

I will not reiterate all the well-known facts about the internment. Let me make a few quick statements.

The relocation and internment was such a traumatic experience for the 120,000 Japanese-American people involved that nearly forty years have elapsed before they and their children could discuss it among themselves and with the larger community. People who came to the Church

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Council of Greater Seattle to relate the story openly wept. It was the most gross denial of constitutional rights for citizens and resident aliens that our nation has ever known. In the process, rights denied or abridged were: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom from cruel and unusual punishment, freedom of press, right to assemble, right to keep and bear arms, freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, right to be informed of charges, right to speedy and public trial by jury, right to be confronted by accusatory witnesses, right to call favorable witnesses, right to legal counsel, right to reasonable bail, right to habeas corpus, right to life, liberty and property, right against involuntary servitude, and the right to vote. It was a dark and lamentable moment in our American history of civil and human rights. The Commission must spell this out clearly so that in another moment of national hysteria, God forbid, we do not do this again. -

Secondly, the property and human time and potential lost by the interned people cannot be fully repaid by our government. The three billion dollars contained in Representative Mike Lowry's redress legislation is endorsed by the Church Council of Greater Seattle as a step in the right direction, remembering that not money but only new resolve by our nation to never do this again can begin to give some solace to the aggrieved Japanese-American community.

The Commission must clarify some of the confused, racist thinking of the American people that still exists about the distinction between Japanese-Americans and Japanese nationals in World War II. As late as

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August of this year over a local radio station a woman said, in response to the redress idea, "Perhaps it is time that the American people ask the Japanese government to make restitution to the families of those American servicemen who were killed by a sneak attack and also pay us, the United States Government, for the property and damages they did on that fateful Sunday." Pearl Harbor was a deed of the Imperial Japanese Army . . . the only 'guilt' the Japanese-Americans possess is that they were of the same ancestral roots. They were in no way involved in any action against the U. S. government in World War II. The record shows that the Japanese-American community was made up of one hundred per cent loyal American people during the Second World War. The relocation and internment of Japanese-American people was the end result of long standing racist attitudes toward Asian people by other American people.

Our recommendation to the Commission is that our guilt be publicly acknowledged by our nation in regard to our tragic treatment of part of our citizenry and that we back Representative Mike Lowry's legislation in providing a three billion dollar gift of symbolic reparation. This is as little as we can do and still uphold the dignity, honor and constitution of our nation.

William B. Cate

The Reverend Dr. William B. Cate
President-Director
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