

9/08/81

9.9.19

Seattle, Washington

To: The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians

My name is Tomio Moriguchi and I am president of Uwajimaya, a Pacific Northwest Food Distributing Company. By this time in the hearings you will not be surprised by most of the experiences related to you. They are still each unique, however.

My father, a grocery merchant from Tacoma, was sent to Pinedale, California, with his wife and young children. What he was forced to leave behind in his grocery business may not have been valuable in tangible monetary terms. What was of more value was his lifetime of struggle, dreams, and hopes for a bright future.

My father returned to this area in 1945 and decided that this was his country, this was the birthplace of his family - which had then grown to include seven children. With only four hundred dollars in his pocket, but with the encouragement of many friends, he restarted his business. Since then, the business has grown at over 20 percent, compounded the last 36 years. What would the growth rate have been without those years in camp? Four years at 20 percent compounded growth rate would double any business. Perhaps it could be argued that if it had not have been for the internment, our family business would be twice the size it is today.

Another point is that my immigrant father started to work when he was 24 years old. He was interned from the age of 43-47. He passed away when he was 62--after a short 38 years of struggle. The internment denied him more than 10 percent of his productive life--and at that period which would have been his prime.

For this and all the other hardships which others have testified to, redress is long overdue. The proposed amount of \$15,000 for every internee, plus \$15 per day is hardly adequate. The approximate total would be three billion dollars, equivalent to the cost of 15 B-1 Bombers or perhaps the cost of one Trident. All these were built to do what? Think about it--we as a nation spend over 200 billion dollars annually in arms for what purpose? How ironic that we spend billions to defend our basic rights and freedom from other nations, and yet within our own borders we take away those very rights from a group of people.

In its July 27, 1981 editorial, the Wall Street Journal wrote, "There seems little chance that these proposals will pass, not least because the family income of Japanese Americans is more than 30 percent above the national average. So, the Commission's hearings have been mostly symbolic, addressing the question, how guilty should we feel?"

I have asked this writer: Would he give up his right to seek legal redress against a person who swindled him on a real estate or stock deal solely because his family income exceeds the national average by 30 percent? We do not ask for your guilt or pity. We ask for justice.

I believe this commission should recommend immediate monetary redress to all living internees. These monies should be made federally tax free, and the recipients should be allowed to spend these funds as they see fit, without undue pressure or force.