

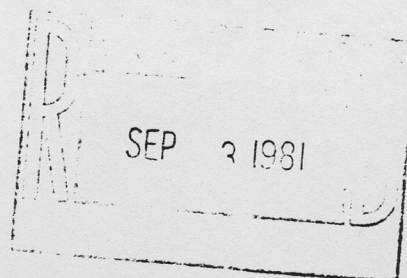
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TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO  
THE COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS

BY  
THE FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

August 28, 1981



My name is Jeffrey Caden and I am a volunteer for the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The Fellowship was founded in Cambridge, England in 1914 and there are now organized groups in 27 countries with an international secretariat in Holland. The Fellowship of Reconciliation is composed of women and men who recognize the essential unity of all humanity and have joined together to explore the power of love and truth for resolving human conflicts. While it has always been vigorous in its opposition to war, the FOR has insisted equally that this effort must be rooted in a commitment to the achieving of a peaceful world which cherishes and defends the full dignity and freedom of every human being. It is with this basic premise in mind that I speak with you today in support of recognition of the wrong committed against Japanese American citizens and resident aliens, and in support of redress.

Before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Curtis Munson, State Department special investigator, authored a report confirming the loyalty of individuals of Japanese descent and saying that they did not pose any threat whatever to national security. After December 7, 1941, political and public opinion swayed dramatically, especially on the West Coast. This hysteria became the impetus for the calculated and well documented denial of human rights to Japanese American citizens and residents.

Many Americans of high moral conviction were aware of this travesty of justice, but unfortunately, a wave of unwarranted fear and ignorance prevailed. Public opinion was affected by remarks made by influential voices such as that of California Attorney General Earl Warren when he declared that, "the Japanese situation as it exists in this state today may be the Achilles heel of the entire civilian defense effort. Unless something is done, it may bring about a repetition of Pearl Harbor." On that same day, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution urging the removal of Japanese nationals from the West Coast, pointing out that "the United States has learned the bitter lesson of Japanese treachery..." Also on February second, Senator Wallgren of Washington State said that plans for removal of "enemy aliens" from critical defense areas had been completed

by the Justice Department. Many troubled consciences were salved by remarks such as those of U.S. Representative Sheppard who stated on February 18, "No one with any knowledge of Japanese psychology can apply the complete significance of civil liberties in this case because it constitutes a national hazard." These irresponsible and misleading statements are mild in tone relative to some public opinion, but they clearly support the idea that removal of Japanese from the West Coast was essential to national security.

At the same time, Attorney General Biddle was fighting for rationality with statements such as, "if we create the feeling among aliens and other foreign born that they are not wanted here, we shall endanger our national unity. Such an impression could only give aid and comfort to those enemies whose aim it is to infect us with distrust of each other and turn aliens in America against America."

Attempts at reasoning, however, were silenced by fear. The ignorance and hysteria that allowed us to throw all Japanese Americans into concentration camps is epitomized by editorial columnist Henry McLemore. In January and February of 1942, his column, which appeared in the Seattle Times, reflected the very racism that we were supposedly fighting against in Nazi Germany. On January 30, he stated, "We are at war...so what does the government do about the tens of thousands of Japanese...Nothing. The only Japanese apprehended are the ones the FBI actually had something on. The rest of them, so help me, are as free as birds... You walk up and down the streets and you bump into Japanese in every block. They take the parking stations. They get ahead of you in the stamp line at the post office. They have their share of seats on the bus and street car lines...I am for immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast to a point deep in the interior. I don't mean a nice part of the interior, either. Herd 'em up, pack 'em off and give 'em the inside room in the badlands. Let 'em be pinched, hurt, hurt, hungry and dead up against it...Let us have no patience with the enemy or with anyone whose veins carry his blood...Personally I hate the Japanese. And that goes for all of them. Let's quit worrying about the enemy's feelings and start doing it."

Hysteria reigned as EO 9066 was put into effect and subsequently abused by removing all Japanese, two-thirds of whom were American citizens. They were rounded up and incarcerated in concentration camps for an average of 3½ years. In the process, every one of our civil liberties guaranteed by the constitution and bill of rights was denied them. Although William O. Douglas was swayed, along with a majority of the Supreme Court, by the Pentagon's scare tactics, a decision he deeply regretted later, he recently stated in his biography, "The severe bite of the military evacuation order was not in a requirement to move out, but in the requirement to move out of the West Coast and move into concentration camps in the interior. Locking up the evacuees after they had been removed had no military justification.

No person of Japanese ancestry living in the U.S. was ever charged with espionage or sabotage, Japanese Americans fighting in Europe were some of the most highly decorated in U.S. military history, and the great contributions of Japanese Americans to our society after the war is well documented and undisputed. It is clear that the United States government committed a grave error on February 19, 1942-- an error that has never been satisfactorily redressed.

The conclusions of this committee will have a great impact on U.S. society as a whole. Racism and ethnocentrism have dictated many national and international policies throughout our history. Since our beginnings, we have represented to the world a contradiction between our stated values in human rights and dignity, and our continued practice of racial and ethnic exploitation, at home and abroad. Thomas Jefferson expressed this same concern when he said, "Indeed, I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just."

This commission's objective is to "determine whether a wrong was committed against Japanese American citizens and resident aliens, and to recommend appropriate remedies." Argument over the point of wrongdoing can only be construed as continued and deliberate avoidance of the truth. A clear recommendation for monetary compensation will be a first step in regaining our self-respect in the world community by bringing policy and practice into alignment.

*Joseph P. Cas*