

Olympia, Washington 98502
July 14, 1981

To the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians
Washington, D. C.

We are not of Japanese ancestry but we were closely involved in the life of the Japanese community of Salem, Oregon, from 1935 to 1939. Mrs. Ellis was church school teacher and later the director of all church activities in the Japanese Community Christian Church.

In 1939 we went to New York City to study at Columbia University where we became associated with the Japanese Methodist Church, becoming advisers for the young people's activities. As resettlement progressed we met many young people who came from the camps and heard their stories of camp life. We sensed something of the effects of camp life on the people. We have kept in touch with almost all of the nisei from the Salem church as well as some of those we met in New York City. While in New York Dr. Ellis helped organize the New York City chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. Since returning to the west coast we have been, and are now, active in that organization.

In Salem, we were deeply impressed by the rapport of the Japanese community and even more by the success of the nisei youth in adjusting to the general community - in particular to the public schools and college. When wartime troubles came, we were too far from our Salem friends to help with the severe problems they were facing. We were severely shocked to learn of the disruption of their home, school, and church life; for us this was a traumatic experience. We would not have been surprised if a few aliens had been interned but we had been sure that American citizens would have been protected by their government.

The adults had worked hard to establish their homes and to educate their children. It was distressing that they were losing almost everything

they had gathered together during those years of hard effort. We have no figures on the amount of their financial losses but they must have been great. We have convictions about even greater non-financial losses brought about by the evacuation. The disruption of a stable community which was making a significant contribution to the state through the production of food and through some business services was a loss to the whole northwest. The movement of skilled farmers to the relocation centers not only destroyed an important wartime source of food, but it shifted many in later years to an urban environment representing a real loss as they obtained employment for which they were not trained.

One of the most serious results was the weakening of family ties by life in the concentration camps and by the relocation of members of the families farther east while leaving the heads of families in camp. The Japanese community had been marked by a stable family pattern. The destruction of an active church was a loss of the property values in the buildings, but of far greater importance was the loss in the inspiration it was giving to a high quality of life.

A major concern of ours was that for many it weakened the confidence (a) in their cultural background, (b) in their own place in our society, and (c) even in the willingness of their own country to protect them. We should add that most of these people have nevertheless developed constructive lives.

In view of the seriousness of the disorganizing damage to the lives of a loyal segment of our society, though much of the damage cannot be repaired, we believe that those affected should be compensated in some part by a significant appropriation in redress.

Respectfully submitted,

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