

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: February 8, 1979

FROM: John Tateishi, Chairman, JACL National Committee for Redress

Report on the meeting between JACL representatives and Nikkei members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, held on February 1, 1979, in Washington, D.C.

Present at the meeting were: Senator Daniel Inouye; Senator Spark Matsunaga; Congressman Norman Mineta; Congressman Bob Matsui; Dr. Clifford Uyeda, JACL National President; Karl Nobuyuki, JACL National Director; Ron Ikejiri, JACL Washington Representative; John Tateishi, Chairman, JACL National Committee for Redress; Ron Mamiya, member, National Committee for Redress

The focus of the meeting addressed possible alternatives vis-a-vis methodology for a Redress bill to be introduced to the United States Congress. Each Congressional member present had been provided with a folder outlining JACL's position on the issue and alternative methods to be explored.

Dr. Uyeda opened the meeting with general comments about JACL's position on the Redress issue, after which John Tateishi explained how the organization arrived at its present position on Redress. Two proposals were then presented as alternative methods for Redress legislation: the IRS check-off plan, presented by Ron Mamiya, and a direct appropriations plan presented by Karl Nobuyuki.

Congressman Mineta, in viewing the IRS plan, expressed what he felt would be a major obstacle of such a proposal--that is, that the IRS at this time is attempting to stream-line and simplify the tax form, and that such a proposal would run counter to this attempt. He further expressed a personal view that the IRS check-off plan, should it be accepted, would draw too much attention to the fact of Japanese Americans receiving monies from the government and would create adverse reactions from the American public.

In response, Senator Matsunaga stated that the IRS plan has some intriguing aspects to it. Specifically, he felt that for educational purposes per se, the plan has merits. Although he agreed that such a plan would draw attention to us, he felt that this at least would lend itself to the education of many Americans about the WWII incarceration. In this regard, he felt no reservations about "waving the red flag."

In a further comment, Senator Matsunaga stated that the intent and purpose of Redress as outlined by JACL (see attachment) has universal appeal and could be questioned by no one. It defines the injustices of Evacuation and promotes American ideals in such a way that its validity is beyond question. This, he felt, presents a strong case for Redress and should be incorporated in the legislation.

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Congressman Matsui concurred with Congressman Mineta's reservations about the IRS plan, that it would draw too much negative attention to the fact of Japanese Americans receiving monetary compensation from the government. He expressed a personal view that he would prefer to see individual payments made only to those people who are currently in financial need, rather than to have individual payments for all persons affected by Executive Order 9066.

Senator Inouye felt that an IRS check-off plan would not be viewed as desirable by Congress because it would possibly encourage other minority groups to seek compensation for past injustices. A further disadvantage is that it would have to go through Ways and Means where it would have little, if any, chance of success. Congressman Mineta concurred with this, as did Senator Matsunaga. Also, such a bill would have variable referrals, which means that it probably would get stopped in a number of committees.

Senator Inouye gave a clear and unequivocal admonition that we would have only one chance at seeking Redress for Japanese Americans and that, should we fail in our attempt, it is unlikely that we will have another opportunity to return to Congress with Redress legislation. For this reason, we must give a great deal of thought to the type of legislation we introduce. He also stated that there is no question that we were treated unjustly by the American government and that we are completely justified in seeking Redress. However, he expressed the view that, while \$25,000 is in no way adequate as compensation for what we suffered, \$3 billion would never be acceptable to the Congress of the United States. With this in mind, he recommended that we consider introducing a bill which would establish a Congressional commission to study the Redress issue. The advantage of such a commission would be that, on the one hand, it would lend credibility to Redress if the recommendation of the commission were in our favor, and also that the commission would lay the preliminary groundwork for introduction of a Redress bill to the Congress.

In further discussions of the commission idea, Congressman Mineta indicated that there would be some difficulty in the House to pass legislation which seeks to establish a commission of any sort because there currently appears to be an anti-commission attitude in the House of Representatives. Both Senators Inouye and Matsunaga felt confident that legislation to establish a commission on this issue could be passed in the Senate.

When asked whether there could be some determination of the make-up of a Congressional commission, Senator Inouye stated that

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this could be incorporated in the bill by giving specifics. He also recommended that, to give further credibility to the commission, perhaps no Nikkei should receive appointments to such a commission.

A question of introducing concurrently a number of Redress bills was raised, to which Senators Inouye and Matsunaga and Congressman Mineta felt that such a strategy is inadvisable because it would give the impression that our efforts are not unified. This would be important in addressing Congress, especially since Japanese Americans make up such a small percentage of the general population.

As to the question of including heirs among those eligible for compensation, Senator Matsunaga stated that this would create a lot of problems and would probably work to our disadvantage. He felt that such a provision for Redress would not be acceptable to Congress.

It became clearly evident from this meeting that all four Nikkei legislators are very supportive of our efforts to seek Redress and that they would be willing to carry the ball for us in the United States Congress if we can put together a workable and viable proposal for Redress legislation. Those of us who attended the meeting were encouraged by the feed-back we received and by the supportive attitude expressed by all four legislators.