

April 12, 1980

Dear Frank Abe:

Thanks for your letter of April 7, 1980.

I will try to get a photo of me at this Sunday's organizing meeting for our "Congressional Hearings" (which are tentatively scheduled for May 24th). I don't have any recent photos.

I will try to get a release to you on our telephone poll of the Chicago Japanese American community. We have not had the same kind of activity in Chicago as people have had in Washington and California. But it's steady and effective. We've put out 6 monthly newsletters, printed not mimeographed. They have been timely and have kept our supporters informed of what has been going on. We've met every month, the first Thursday, since we began meeting in July, 1980. We solicit funds and spend them (around \$4,000). We've testified in Washington. We've submitted a petition to the General Conference of the United Methodist Church and will probably be there to lobby for it in the next few days. We've established a lobbyist in Washington.

I think the projected newsletter sounds good. I think it's a mistake to produce it so infrequently and to try to make it speak for the whole movement. I think letters and postcards from constituents are far more effective with Congress than a newsletter. Newsletters should be for the rank-and-file. You will not impress anyone in Congress with a newsletter.

I do not believe it is possible to pass the Lowry Bill in this session of Congress. The support for the Study Commission is overwhelming. Congress loves the Commission bill because it lets them off the hook. It's cheap. It has all the rhetoric about the injustice of the camps and upholding America's commitment to human rights going for it. There can be nothing more popular than to be for justice when it costs you nothing. So I have no plans on passing the Lowry Bill.

Of course, I will speak in support of it. And I will fight and attack the Study Commission. It might be possible to support the Commission if at first there were an effort to achieve redress. It would then represent something of a compromise between justice and fiscal conservatism and political power. But the Commission is being touted as the solution to the injustice. That makes it an extension of the internment. We remain Japs. I don't mind being a Jap. I've been one this long. But I do mind being a good Jap.

It is my opinion that once the Commission bill passes, no further consideration of redress will be made until its work is completed. Kathy Haley (Garland) disagrees; but she admits that she does not know for sure. She will find out. It doesn't seem logical to me. In the first place, a Study Commission is normally a sop which is handed out to those whose measure is defeated. It is truly ironic that the JACL is pushing for the sop without trying for redress. They have read the mind of Congress, like an expert hooker. Congress loves it. In the second place, it is not reasonable for Congress to consider redress when it has a Commission out there gathering facts "to determine whether a wrong was committed." Congress should wait until the study is done and the report submitted. If my reasoning holds up, and if the Lowry Bill does not pass in 1980, then we will have to wait a number of years until a redress bill can be introduced in Congress. (The 18-month deadline is meaningless. All commissions receive extensions when they ask for it. After all, why not?)

Frank Abe
April 12, 1980
page two

We need to be prepared for a long struggle. And I think we need to be careful about where we stand.

I am all in favor of getting people to Washington to testify in the House hearings. We've got to let the JACL and the Washington establishment realize that the JACL does not run the show anymore. (By the way, I don't think they completely goofed in the Senate hearings. They are not really in favor of redress anymore. They favor kissing the asses of Congress; they like hobnobbing with the members of Congress, not at all unlike how they hobnobbed with Naval Intelligence in 1941-42. Some day they'll realize that a personal opinion is no good, even if it's "right", if you fail to take the right public position.) Congress, the news media, and the people have to realize that there is a strong, vocal opposition to the Study Commission. The hearings, if we're there in force, become the kick-off to the next phase.

The next phase is the Commission hearings themselves.

This has been a difficult problem for me to think about. There is a strong temptation to participate in the hearings. The ACLU has argued that there may be some way we can get the commissioners to recommend redressing the victims. That may be possible. But it is also true that our participation in the hearings ~~is~~ will tend to legitimate them. Just as the JACL wished to neutralize Hayakawa through the hearings, they probably see the hearings as a way of neutralizing our attacks on them. The power of decision for the hearings resides with the commissioners. Who are they? What will they do? To whom will they listen?

Congress has already told them that the wrong cannot be redressed. The JACL has given them a free hand to come up with anything they decide upon. That's peasant-Japanese thinking. Mike Masaoka, Bill Marutani, Kaz Oshiki, and Min Yasui have laid the groundwork for their foundation-for-good-works. Masaoka, in addition, has raised a whole series of "interesting" questions for the Commission to work on, as though somehow there really does exist a need to "gather facts". I see the Commission hearings as being diffuse, with many people telling their individual stories and making vague appeals for justice. My hunch is that the educational value, if there is any, will be to demonstrate to Japanese Americans just how powerless they are.

I think the Commission hearings should be picketed and protested. My hunch is that we would be far more effective in getting the redress alternative across to the citizenry via the media than by participating in the hearings. I'm not sure just how many people we can get to support us. But this is where I stand on the next phase.

I don't like the idea of trying to meet at Lake Tahoe in order to form a national coalition. It will cost everyone extra time and money to get there. Why not meet in L.A.? Most of us have friends or relatives we can stay with. There are lots of people in L.A. who would be interested. Air fares to L.A. are cheaper than to most other West Coast cities. There are far more effective uses for money.

Frank Abe
April 12, 1980
page three

Moreover, I feel you may be imposing too much structure on the meeting. I'm not interested in training how to answer questions by the media or sitting through a recitation of the history of the movement. I think we ought to discuss and decide whether we want to form a national coalition or not. I would resist any attempt by anyone to assume the reins of power. Power does tend to corrupt. If we can work together, that's fine. If we can't, that's o.k., too. It could be a very short meeting.

I have very little interest in working with the JACL. They are deceitful and treacherous. Who knows where they stand on redress? Their president seems to be unable or unwilling to make a single clear statement on the issue. The use of an ad in the Chicago Shimpo as a way of stating their opposition to the Lowry Bill is just plain sneaky. They say so to readers of the Chicago Shimpo. But they say nothing to their own membership. They keep saying that they're working for the same goal of redress, but they are incapable of telling Congress that. They demand loyalty of their local chapters and thereby interpose themselves between their members and their members' elected representatives in Congress. Worst of all, they have probably succeeded in destroying the redress movement for this decade. They maintain a very loud silence in response to the Masaoka-Marutani-Oshiki-Yasui proposal. And it seems that no one within the organization has the strength of character to hold their leadership accountable. The only thing that does seem to get a rise out of them is when we drop a little shit on their beloved Nikkei congressmen.

You should inform those who intend to testify that they should write now to Peter W. Rodino, Jr. to ask to testify before his committee if and when they hold hearings on H.R. 5499 or H.R. 5977 or both. I've received an acknowledgment of my request to testify on both and have been told that I will be notified.

If you want to improve our relationship with you, return the loan of \$800. We could sure use it. We cannot understand why you cannot raise money in Seattle.

Peace,

Wm Hohri

Wm Hohri

cc: Aiko Herzig, Lillian Nakano, Karen Seriguchi