

June 18, 1979

The Pacific Citizen
Room 307
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Los Angeles, California 90012

grave injustices

Dear Editor:

The "Redress, Commission Approach" and "What Will Win" statements demand response.

In the first statement, we are told that the Commission was designed to circumvent the "no change of passage" of the Seattle bill; that the Commission will take us one step closer to redress; that therefore it is a "responsible action toward the Japanese American community." Very persuasive. But the undisclosed fact is that the fact-finding aspect of the Commission was suggested as a method of neutralizing Senator Hayakawa. The Commission is to conduct an inquiry into whether grave injustices occurred, whether we internees suffered, and whether redress should be made. It was hoped that the findings of the Commission on these points would effectively rebut and refute the senator's anti-redress utterances. Why hide ~~this~~ fact from the membership? Or has Hayakawa already refuted this stratagem? His response on learning about the JACL's Commission approach was "Why don't we drop the whole matter?" (PC 5-18-79) Can Hayakawa ever be neutralized?

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If we remove this fact-finding aspect, if we change the "whether" into "whereas," the need for the Commission disappears. We would be affirming the need for redress. The only thing left would be the method and amounts of payment. This, surely, would be something Congress itself could do.

What are the facts regarding the Nikkei legislators? We are led to believe, by careful language, that their "suggestion was the Commission approach." But the actual wording is "The suggestion was the Commission approach." Not dumb. What was their position? Senator Inouye favored the Commission approach and felt uncomfortable with the IRS method of funding. Senator Matsunaga was intrigued by the IRS approach. Congressman Mineta opposed the IRS method because it involved too many congressional committees. He also opposed the Commission if it would do nothing Congress itself could not do. Congressman Matsui favored redress for those in need. That's really not quite so tidily in favor of a Commission is it?

As to the question of contravention, we are told "It was the determination of the National JACL Legal Counsel that the Commission approach does not violate the Salt Lake City mandate." Well, at least he's got his advocacy role straight. I suppose it is possible to argue that since the Commission may arrive at a recommendation similar to the 1978 mandate, the mandate is not, with total certainty, violated. Legal advocacy has its function when both sides are advocated and adjudicated by an impartial judge. But one side advocacy? Clifford Uyeda, in his memorandum of 8-8-78, clearly defines the guidelines on which the Bill presented to Congress is to be based. These guidelines include eligibility, individual payments, Latin Americans of Japanese ancestry, the responsibility of the U. S. for claims processing and payments, and a trust foundation. The Commission Bill is based on none of these.

I believe that Tateishi is quite sincere when he calls the redress effort "a game." We, the membership, have been played with and manipulated. We have not been given the straight facts. We have been led to conclusions. We are told the Commission is our only hope, not a stratagem to neutralize Hayakawa. We are led to believe the four Nikkei legislators came up with the idea of a Commission. Only Senator Inouye did. The fact-finding aspect comes from Mike Masaoka and Kaz Oshiki. We are told that the 1978 National Council mandate is not violated by the Commission Bill when that Bill contains none of the guidelines required by that mandate.

Fortunately for us, the Seattle redress bill will be introduced in the Congress. JACL members and friends will be able to channel their frustrations creatively. Both the Northern Illinois and Pacific Northwest Conferences of The United Methodist Church voted overwhelmingly in support of this bill. The American Friends Service Committee, midwest region, voted its support. It's just the beginning. This bill offers no assurance of victory, no alleged sophistication in gamesmanship. But it does offer a clear statement of the case for redress and a clear expression of the will of the people who support redress.

Sincerely yours,

W.H.

William Hohri

