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INTERNMENT HEARINGS BEGIN IN SEATTLE

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SEATTLE -- RACISM, NOT NATIONAL SECURITY, WAS THE MOST BASIC REASON FOR THE WORLD WAR II INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE-AMERICANS, AND THAT WRONG SHOULD BE RIGHTED BY MONETARY AWARDS, A NUMBER OF WITNESSES TOLD A FEDERAL COMMISSION WEDNESDAY.

A PANEL OF EIGHT WITNESSES FROM HAWAII SAID THE VASTLY DIFFERENT WARTIME EXPERIENCES OF JAPANESE-AMERICANS ON HAWAII AND ON THE MAINLAND SHOWED NATIONAL SECURITY WAS NOT THE KEY ISSUE IN THE INCARCERATION OF 120,000 JAPANESE ON THE WEST COAST.

BUT TWO OF THE INITIAL WITNESSES SPEAKING BEFORE A SCHEDULED THREE-DAY HEARING OF THE COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF CIVILIANS ARGUED SPIRITEDLY AGAINST ANY AWARDS TO JAPANESE-AMERICANS CONFINED DURING THE WAR.

THE COMMISSION SHOULD REJECT "ANY FINDING OR CONCEPT OF NATIONAL GUILT FOR THE RELOCATION," SAID HENRY KANE, A BEAVERTON, ORE., LAWYER.

"...THE UNITED STATES COMMITTED NO 'CRIME' THAT COMPELS, MERITS OR SUGGESTS 'REDRESS' OR 'REPARATION,'" KANE SAID.

NEITHER INTERNED RESIDENT ALIENS NOR INTERNED U.S. CITIZENS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY SHOULD BE COMPENSATED, KANE ADDED.

HIS STATEMENT THAT INTERNMENT OF THE LATTER GROUP WAS "ONE OF THE BURDENS OF CITIZENSHIP" DREW LOUD BOOS FROM THE CAPACITY CROWD AT A SEATTLE CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE AUDITORIUM.

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS LAST YEAR, THE COMMISSION IS CHARGED WITH INVESTIGATING THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE EVACUATION OF THE JAPANESE FROM WEST COAST STATES AND THEIR SUBSEQUENT INTERNMENT IN CAMPS. ALEUT RESIDENTS OF BOTH THE ALEUTIAN AND PRIBILOF ISLANDS ALSO WERE REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES FROM 1942 TO 1944.

AS WELL AS DETERMINING CAUSES, THE COMMISSION IS CHARGED WITH RECOMMENDING REMEDIES, INCLUDING DECIDING WHETHER MONETARY RESTITUTION IS WARRANTED.

HEARINGS IN WASHINGTON, D.C., LOS ANGELES AND SAN FRANCISCO PRECEDED THE SEATTLE HEARING, WHICH RUNS THROUGH FRIDAY. THREE ADDITIONAL HEARINGS ARE SCHEDULED IN ALASKA AND ONE IN CHICAGO.

"MR. KANE, WHAT IS YOUR ETHNIC BACKGROUND?" ASKED FORMER U.S. SEN. EDWARD W. BROOKE OF MASSACHUSETTS, A COMMISSION MEMBER AND A BLACK MAN.

"I'M OF JEWISH ANCESTRY," KANE REPLIED.

"MY GOD, I'D THINK YOU'D BE ARGUING (THAT INTERNMENT WAS WRONG) HARDER THAN I AM," SAID BROOKE.

"WELL, I ALSO DIFFERED WITH YOU ON THE PANAMA CANAL ISSUE," KANE REPLIED.

A 77-YEAR-OLD PEARL HARBOR VETERAN WHO SAYS HE HAS SPENT 38 YEARS TRYING UNSUCCESSFULLY TO WIN DISABILITY BENEFITS FROM THE

NAVY FOR A FALL HE TOOK AT THE PUGET SOUND NAVAL SHIPYARD SAID HE, HIS WIFE AND THE SURVIVORS OF THE U.S. SERVICEMEN KILLED IN THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR SHOULD BE COMPENSATED, NOT THE JAPANESE-AMERICAN INTERNEES.

"IF YOU (JAPANESE-AMERICANS) WANT ANY MONEY, SUE THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT," SAID THOMAS TODD. "GOD FORBID, BUT IF JAPAN HAD WON THE WAR, WHOSE SIDE WOULD YOU BE ON NOW?"

"MR. TODD, NO ONE WANTS TO DENY YOU OR YOUR COLLEAGUES AT PEARL HARBOR THE RIGHT TO ANY COMPENSATION TO WHICH YOU ARE ENTITLED," BROOKE SAID.

MORE

APTV-09-09 1732PDT