

[REDACTED]
NOVEMBER 29, 1989

Ms. DEBORAH K. LIM
[REDACTED]

DEAR Ms. LIM,

I AM VERY SORRY TO HAVE TAKEN SO LONG TO RESPOND TO YOUR LETTER OF OCTOBER 17TH IN WHICH YOU STATED THAT YOU ARE SOLICITING A WRITTEN STATEMENT REGARDING THE JACL DURING ITS WARTIME POLICIES.

AS FAR AS THE EVACUATION WAS CONCERNED, I WOULD NOT JUDGE THE POSITION THAT THE JACL TOOK AS AN ORGANIZATION. I, AS AN INDIVIDUAL UNSOPHISTICATED IN MATTERS OF CIVIL RIGHTS BACK THEN, HAD NO THOUGHTS OTHER THAN TO OBEY THE MILITARY ORDERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE LEADERS OF THE JACL, AMONG THE MEMBERS WERE ATTORNEYS, WHO WERE BETTER EDUCATED AND A LITTLE OLDER THAN THE MANY OF US, MIGHT HAVE CONSIDERED OTHER OPTIONS IF SOMEONE HAD SOME INTESTINAL FORTITUDE.

ALTHOUGH THE POSITION OF THE JACL AS AN ORGANIZATION WAS TO COOPERATE AND COLLABORATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO THE TUNE OF 110%, I BELIEVE THEY SHOULD HAVE BACKED THE TEST CASES BROUGHT BY INDIVIDUALS LIKE YASUI, HIRABAYASHI AND KOREMATSU. THAT THE JACL LEADERSHIP DISCOURAGED THESE TEST CASES IS TO THEIR EVERLASTING SHAME.

AS TO THE JACL'S POSITION AND POLICY TOWARDS THE DRAFT RESISTANCE IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS. DURING THE TIME THAT WE AMERICAN CITIZENS WERE INTERNED WITHOUT DUE PROCESS, MY FEELINGS AND MY THINKING HAS NOT CHANGED ONE IOTA. THE JACL'S POSITION WAS NOT ONLY DEAD WRONG, BUT WAS DISGRACEFUL. IN THEIR MAD RUSH TO GAIN PUBLIC OPINION AND ACCEPTANCE FROM WHITE AMERICA, THEY RAN ROUGHSHOD OVER PRINCIPLES AND GOOD LAW.

WE AT HEART MOUNTAIN CONCENTRATION CAMP CHALLENGED THE LEGALITY OF THE DRAFT BEING APPLIED TO INTERNEES WHO WERE INCARCERATED WITHOUT DUE PROCESS AND WHOSE CIVIL RIGHTS WERE SUSPENDED. THE CONSTITUTION AND BILL OF RIGHTS WAS OUR GROUNDS FOR THIS CHALLENGE. WE ACTED AS MANY FREE MEN HAVE ACTED IN THE FACE OF OPPRESSION; AND WE WERE PREPARED TO FACE THE CONSEQUENCES.

FOR TAKING THIS STAND, THE JACL LEADERSHIP IN THEIR ZEAL FOR BECOMING SUPER-PATRIOTS, LABELED US AND ALL OTHER DRAFT RESISTORS AS "SUBVERSIVES," "DISLOYALS," "PROVOCATEURS;" ETC.

FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, IF THE JACL DID NOT WANT TO TAKE A STAND IN SUPPORT OF THOSE INTERNEES WHO WERE PROTESTING THE DRAFTING OF THE INMATES OF THE INTERNMENT CAMPS, THE LEAST THEY COULD HAVE DONE WAS TO REMAIN NEUTRAL. THEIR ACTIONS WERE REMINSCENT OF VICHY, FRANCE

AND OF QUISLING IN NORWAY.

THEY MAY BE HARSH WORDS, BUT YOU MUST REMEMBER THE CONDITIONS THAT EXISTED AT THAT TIME. IF YOU RECOUNT OUR BITTER EXPERIENCE TO ANY NEUTRAL OBSERVER, AND TELL THEM OF THE GOVERNMENT'S AUDACITY TO APPLY THE DRAFT LAW INTO THE CAMPS JUST AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED, 10 OUT OF 10 PERSONS WOULD SAY THEY WOULD HAVE TAKEN THE SAME STAND AS WE DID. ONE CATCH. THEY WOULD NOT BE JAPANESE. IN FACT, DURING THE TRIAL OF THE 63 RESISTORS FROM THE HEART MT. FAIR PLAY COMMITTEE, A REPORTER WAS HEARD TO REMARK THAT "IF I HAD BEEN TREATED LIKE THE EVACUEES, I'D BE DAMNED IF I'D JOIN THE ARMY". (FROM DOUGLAS W. NELSON'S BOOK, "HEART MOUNTAIN, THE HISTORY OF AN AMERICAN CONCENTRATION CAMP". PAGE 144. AS A MATTER OF FACT, EVERY NON JAPANESE PERSON THAT I HAVE TALKED TO REGARDING OUR EXPERIENCE, HAVE ALL EXPRESSED THE VERY SAME OPINION THAT I MENTIONED ABOVE.

Now, we come to a matter that was brought up at the last JACL convention in Seattle. That of an apology by the JACL to the "No No" boys and to the draft resistors. I know that some of the Heart Mt. draft resistors want an apology and some don't care. Personally, I don't give a darn about an apology, but I do feel that some sort of acknowledgement by the JACL as to the over-zealousness of their war-time leaders condemnation of the draft resistors would be in order. As to the "No No" people, for the JACL to acknowledge that they had a legitimate reason for answering the loyalty questionnaire as they did would also be in order. After all, it was the government's stupidity and ineptness to prepare such a loyalty questionnaire under those conditions, is what brought on the predictable responses to the questionnaire.

Even the Amnesty Board, when issuing pardons to the Nisei draft resistors, recognized the dilemma of the resistors. I have enclosed a copy of that proclamation. (You might have a copy in the packet that was handed out at the forum here in L. A.)

I have also enclosed some other items which may be of some interest to you in your research.

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF I CAN BE OF ANY FURTHER HELP TO YOU.

SINCERELY,

Frank S. Emi
FRANK S. EMI

*JACL
copy
to
D. F. O. L.
copy.*