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The Rocky Shimpo

Largest Nisei Vernacular in Continental U.S.A

Published Tri-Weekly

James M. Omura
English Editor

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Hon. James E. Markham
Alien Property Custodian
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

I have before me your emergency telegram of March 30th to Miss Tetsuko Toda in which you apparently question the editorial integrity and moral object of the English Section on the issue of Nisei selective service and command us to "effect an immediate and unequivocal revision in the policy of The Rocky Shimpo on this question."

I regret very deeply that your office is inclined to believe that whether intentionally or unintentionally we are encouraging resistance to the draft. I personally feel that resistance to selective service is a purely personal matter. In view of the serious consequences involved, I would and do hesitate to influence the Nisei-at-large to oppose the draft.

However, I do believe that the facts in the case should and ought to be presented. All facets of this question should be discussed. If you would look into all other publications, I believe that you will discover that both sides of the issue have not been presented. In view of this lack, The Rocky Shimpo has attempted to present the Nisei view and that is what it has been most interested in doing.

I believe strongly in judicial and/or legislative clarification of the Nisei citizenship status. Toward that end, we have editorially supported whatever movements that have been forthcoming to clarify this issue. For that reason and mainly for that reason, I have been inclined to support the Heart Mt. Fair Play Committee.

Your reference to the Fair Play Committee is in a sense an implied condemnation of that organization. A question the justice of this, for it seems only fair and proper that the benefit of doubt should be accorded the committee so long as it pursues a policy of constitutional clarification on this momentous issue.

The fact that the Fair Play Committee is opposing the administration in Heart Mountain and is dedicated to resistance to the draft for the express purpose of contesting the legality of the reinstatement of selective service without joint reinstatement of constitutional guarantees are in themselves not a prima facie evidence of disloyalty, mal-intent or misconduct. Of course this action may be misguided, but we cannot know that

until we have legal decision upon the point raised. I hope that you will concede that there is a point.

In respect to your several representations on particular issues, I make the following clarifications:

1. The lead article of March 10th, in our opinion, does not indicate "evident gratification of difficulties encountered by federal authorities." It is written in a reportorial fashion quite in keeping with established journalistic customs and simply quotes the dispatch received at this office. The Rocky Shimpo would be glad to furnish a copy of this dispatch in its original form. The headlines are written as headlines are written generally in American journalism.

2. The lead article of March 20th, in our opinion, is not a "distorted treatment of conditions at Heart Mountain." This article was based upon a report, as we state, given out to the U.P. news service, Chicago Tribune and The Denver Post. We will also be glad to submit a copy of this report in its original context upon request.

3. We fail to observe ambiguity in our editorials of Feb. 21st and 28th and request that we be advised of specific charges. We would be glad to offer an explanation to such charges.

4. The editorial of Feb. 28th do not imply that The Rocky Shimpo would approve of resistance to the draft if the "resisters were more numerous and differently organized." The complete sentence read: "Those who are resisting the draft are too few, too unorganized **AND BASICALLY UNSOUND IN THEIR VEEWPOINTS.**" The implication here is not that we would support the draft resisters if they were not so few and not so unorganized, but that we would support a well-organized group which seeks proper clarification of Nisei citizenship status.

It must be remembered that the Fair Play Committee appeared in the public limelight after this editorial was written. We said here that we would support an organization seeking proper clarification on this issue, and when the FPC stood forth, we immediately championed its cause on--and only on--the principle of constitutional clarification.

It is our considered belief that we have not been amiss in our editorial policy on this question. We have been consistent on the draft. In virtually every editorial on Nisei selective service our underlying theme has been constitutional clarification on this point.

It is our opinion that the question here is on interpretation. As we all know, ~~we~~ can interpret articles in several different ways. If we wish to regard those who are responsible for such articles with ill-intent, we can interpret it in that sense. If we wish to look at it objectively--in accordance with the journalistic practice and customs generally common to that period--we again can do so. And interpretation is of the individual, too. One may see it as indirect incitement; another would regard it as analytical and informative.

April 3, 1944.

In respect to "the comparative lack of prominence given to official statements concerning the seriousness of resistance to the draft," I wish to state that no authentic and authoritative statement has been forthcoming from official Washington in regards to the constitutional doubt that has been raised.

In the meantime, we have had a few departmental statements from Dillon S. Myer and a spokesman of the War Department. In each case, no mention has been made to the legality of suspended citizenship rights in connection with selective service.

It must also be understood that such statements have not been received directly at this office and in each instance has been a recopy from relocation center publications. The value as lead article is thereby diminished.

Judicial or legislative clarification or statements from Attorney General Francis Biddle and President Roosevelt would be given headline prominence in The Rocky Shampo. We do not discriminate against news, but they are considered on the basis of its news value, its importance, its timeliness. Those are the factors that largely goes to the determination of prominence given to certain articles that receive top billing---not a distorted newspaper policy.

I have tried to present our position as sensibly and as objectively as possible in the hope that you may better understand us here. I would certainly hate to have you interpret the foregoing as an effort on our part to make a case for ourselves. Our purpose here is an explanation and clarification of the implication you have placed upon our various lead articles and draft editorials.

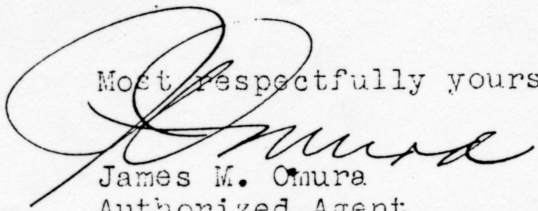
I fully appreciate the leniency and consideration of the Alien Custodian's Office toward The Rocky Shampo and would like to reiterate here that it is not our object to alienate your goodwill by deliberate acts of misconduct and impropriety.

Insofar as my authority is concerned, it is my wish to cooperate with your office to the fullest extent and to eliminate whatever difficulties exist between our respective offices.

We fully realize the delicate position in which we find ourselves as a result of this global war and have no intention of endangering our position under the Trading with the Enemy Act unduly. However, I do not wish you to consider us enemies. We, too, are American citizens in the main.

Hoping that you will accept this explanation and clarification of issues in the spirit in which it is rendered, I remain.

Most respectfully yours,



James M. Omura
Authorized Agent
The Rocky Shampo