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BILL HOSOKAWA interview
JACL CONVENTION -- Salt Lake City -- August 4, 1994
Tapes 409-410

Tape 409

12:56 start of BILL HOSOKAWA

who else was there? no one else. JACL accused of seizing power. no power to seize, Issei community, suddenly no Issei leadership. I don't think JACL leadership wanted all that responsibility. but vacuum had to be filled.

(informing on Issei leadership)

Jimmie kind of fellow when asked about some fellow, this is what I think of him, very direct. there were very difficult. questions. do you know Mr. Yamada, yes I think he's good man, been in country long time. then question if Japanese landed espionage team would he pick up phone and call FBI or might he give them shelter for night. those are variations of what be considered loyal or disloyal.

12:59:17 what choice do you have? young guy with gun pointed at you. And they say this is what you guys are going to do? You don't say wait a minute, I'm going to stand on my Constitutional rights. That's very difficult situation,

12:59:26 Masaoka and the others were aware of the constitutional implications. Runs :04

need to rebalance shadow on right side of face

12:59:34 There are times to hold your cards and a times when you have to fold your cards. I think Masaoka felt he had to fold his cards at that time. Runs: 12

That's a metaphor. I did face guns, people who escorted me into fairgrounds at Puyallup. Bendetsen, get people out within 24 hours.

Tape 410

14:00 well I haven't read Bendetsen' speech, but it was very obvious to us in Seattle how intent they were on carrying it out.

army people and Seattle police talking about how evacuate. 1500 Japanese. they would make up one unit, they had map on wall. looked on map. western Ave. area, thousands and jpn came in to market area. police didn't know that. revelation how ill informed they were. kind of information

contingency plan? it was not possible. how did we know? if they said we're going to move you out, how were we to know they only had 49 tanks, try it.

14:02:36 What Mike felt was that test case would drag out over long period of time. The evacuation would have been long over before you got any kind of hearing. In a case like

this it would take years before any kind of disposition through the judiciary, through the judicial system.

14:02:59 (looks at camera) I never talked to Mike about this particular thing but I think that he felt that the time to come, to fight would come later. Runs :12

(why did Mike oppose Min Yasui test case) I don't know.

(hit with 2x4's) I don't know whether he said that, but I do know

14:04:06 he did go to the jail in Cheyenne to try to persuade them to obey the law, obey the law of the land, obey the Selective Service law, and fight the case later. The men who resisted draft had strong moral case but no legal case.

good publicity more important than good law, let's say it worked, did it not? look around today, interesting to contemplate where we would be today said screw you govt. we're going to stand by our rights and shoot us down if you will.

understand hostility we faced overnight. suddenly we were enemy. blood is thicker than water. you can't trust these slant eyed Japs. in Seattle, girls working as secretaries in grade school offices. these are girls who will answer phones, do you think they will spread the alarm. for safety of children go to get right of these girls.

cooperation under protest? I think that would have been a good thing. there was putting on a cheerful front. what are they supposed to do cry? there was anger and bitterness and despair, but here was feeling by god if this is what we are called on to do , we will do it. I did not make JACL policy.

willful and cheerful, in retrospect, would have been better if said this is unjust, but we will accept it as contribution to war effort, that would have been better if

revise history or be unfair about the camps? to extent to blame everybody in JACL and organization. for something that happened 50 years ago that happened under great duress to make that an issue, is form of historical revision.

14:09:53 I gladly admit that there were mistakes made, but there were mistakes made by government general America by congress by everybody, and to point to JACL and say you guys are bad guys, stupid dolts that sold us down the river, to keep that drumbeat, I don't see wisdom of that.

fully in accord with let's start the healing. started in Seattle when the resolution passed, where is the healing? good start

I don't blame guys for the position they took, took lot of guts,

They endangered the position of other guys.

support position of military,

disagreed with what they are doing but because it endangered other people, but to make that a raging issue fifty years later

14:11 late in 1943 army sent out silly questionnaire that WRA adopted. if everybody hell no we won't go as did during Vietnam war, what would be chances of getting out of camp. good many of us getting out, that program would have been shut off immediately. press extremely hostile, little attempt to ascertain facts. Costello committee, feeding fires. looking for opportunity to nail us

14:15 all information coming to me 3 weeks late. I should register one protest, she makes it sound like I was editor of paper, I had nothing to do with paper. left camp in 43. most of activity took place after I had left. discovered we had run long letters from Paul Nakadate and Frank Emi. given space in paper under my editorship to make his point. felt he had something to say and I resent implication that somehow I was involved in ht. Mt. editorial position in this particular case. I did not.

14:17:05 I felt this was going to lead to trouble.

14L Because you don't do much bitching in a concentration camp.

You jeopardize the positions of other people. Isn't that a, what's the word, well it's an inconsistency. If you're docile, if you're quiet, everything going all right the vast majority of people be treated okay. In Tule lake, in Manzanar, there was violence, the people who really suffered were the innocent bystanders. Tule Lake, they really wanted to be left alone.

14:18:35 The vast majority of people wanted to be left alone. And anybody who wanted to stir it up made it difficult for them. And that is what I meant when I said there might be problems.

14:19 Well in any society I think it's important to consider the welfare of greatest number, yes.

14:19 (why didn't write about them no mention)

I think this is a question that

this is question Jimmie Omura stuck in Jimmie Omura's throat for long, long time. The facts in Nisei is that I was under pressure I did not have the information I needed for full research. It not an effort to suppress that information at all. I just didn't mention.

Nobody told me what to write in that book. JACL Comte did not tell me what to write. they did not see manuscript until it was completed and sent to publisher. Time pressure. Deadline pressure.

(yeah, it was not fair for the American citizens, the nisei. did you think about resisting the military curfew?)

1:21:43 No, actually that period of my life, I wasn't too aware of constitutional rights or anything of that nature, so we just, whatever the military said we figured we wouldn't be able to fight the military or oppose the military so we just went along with whatever they, government decided to do. So as far as resisting the curfew or the expulsion, didn't come to my mind at all. We were very unsophisticated as far as law went, legally.

(how about some of the community leaders in Los Angeles, what were they saying?)

1:22:36 Well, the Rafu Shimpo which carried the English section, always quoted the JACL as saying that we must cooperate with the government. And everybody took that as, uh you know, the way to go. Cause nobody talked about opposing it.

(how aware were you of the JACL as an organization?)

1:23:10 Uh, not too aware. All we had were sort of a cursory information that ...

(how aware were you of the JACL?)

1:23:28 We weren't too aware of the JACL all this time because they were considered sort of a elite social club of lawyers and rich business men, things like that, so really didn't think too much about them.

(were they considered leaders of the community?)

1:23:54 Well it seemed liked they took on the leadership of the community. But, they were the only organization that existed for the Japanese Americans anyway at that time...

(were you a member of the JACL?)

1:24:17 No, I never was a member.

(anyone in your family?)

1:24:21 No.

(anybody in your neighborhood?)

1:24:23 Not that I know of.

(what was your major in college?)

I was going for pre-pharmacy. So I was taking science courses.

(if you had been able to finish college, what would you have wanted to do?)

1:24:32 Become a pharmacist. That was my goal. Which eventually my son became a pharmacist.

(here's something i haven't heard before, describe to me Frank, the evacuation orders, you know when the posters went up on the telephone poles, tell me about that for you.)

Well, JACL quest for justice is primarily story of organization and various presidents. not supposed to be in depth examination of the organization and as such. As for East to America it was Bob Wilson's book and I just polished it up.

yes I think it is. And they've been getting enormous amount of publicity in the Rafu Shimpo and elsewhere.

Do I resent it? No, I never read the Rafu Shimpo.