

FEDERAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDS REDRESS INTERNEED IN CAMPS DURING WORL

by Philip Tajitsu Nash

The Commission on Wartime Rel

Civilians issued its formal recommendations to Congress on June 16, 1983, calling for a one-time payment of \$20,000 for each of the estimated 60,000 living Japanese Americans who were excluded or detained behind barbed wire for an average of two and one-half years during World War II. Among other recommended remedies for the wartime injustice were issuance of a formal national apology; establishment of a special foundation to do educational and humanitarian works; pardoning of those convicted of various detention-related offenses; and payment of compensation for governmental positions, status or entitlements lost. A recommendation was also made to compensate Alaskan Aleuts, who suffered from similar unjust wartime treatment at the hands of their own federal government.

While the recommendations will not become law until acted upon by Congress, they were still greeted with enthusiasm by Japanese Americans all across the country. For example, Japanese American Citizen's League (JACL) Washington Representative Ron Ikejiri was quoted in the New York Times as being "extremely pleased", and National Coalition on Redress/Reparations spokes-

Yuri + Bill - 21 June 83
Here's what you'll see in the Nichibei Friday, but thought you'd like to see the orig. Sent copies to all JA papers + groups. Will send analytical piece + chain letter next phil

person Alan Nishio said his group was "overall quite pleased," despite some reservations.

Reservations expressed by Nishio, William Hohri of the National Council for Japanese American Redress, Haruko Brown of the New York Chapter of the JACL and Cherry Kinoshita of the Washington Coalition on Redress included: displeasure at the low individual dollar amount, concern that a "pardon" would not challenge the underlying injustice of the government's actions, regret that the heirs of deceased victims would not be compensated, and concern about whether those detained prior to the issuance of President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942 would be compensated. In addition, Mr. Hohri wanted to see a recommendation for enabling legislation to support his group's class action lawsuit by waiving the statute of limitations and the government's sovereign immunity. "We'll introduce a bill asking for this," he said, "but we can proceed without it."

The strong recommendations flowed naturally from the Commission's well-documented fact finding report, Personal Justice Denied, which was issued in February 1983, and from a rigorous analysis of property and income losses prepared by I.C.F., Inc., an economic and public policy consulting firm in Washington, D.C.

The nine member Commission, which included such distinguished public servants as former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg, was established by Congress in 1980. It conducted over 20 days of hearings, hearing the testimonies of over 750 witnesses, and analyzed many relevant historical documents before reaching its conclusions. The recommendations were supposed to be issued on June 22,

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but a mysterious leak to the Sacramento (Calif.) Bee necessitated the accelerated release.

Among the legislators familiar with the redress issue, the response to the recommendations was positive. Two of them, Representative Mike Lowry (D-Wash.) and Senator Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), had already prepared redress bills that paralleled the recommendations. Lowry, a longtime friend of the Asian American community in Seattle, introduced his bill two years ago but then decided to wait for the Commission's recommendations; an aide indicated that Lowry's bill already had over twenty co-sponsors, despite not yet having been formally introduced, and differed from the recommendations only in the dollar amount (\$25,000) and the inclusion of heirs as recipients of the individual redress owing to deceased victims. Decisions about whether to conform the existing bill to the recommendations and when to introduce the bill had not been finalized at press time.

An aide to Senator Cranston indicated approval that the recommendations included such a "substantial" individual redress amount, but said that Cranston's bill would be introduced without a dollar amount, "to allow for greater amounts, based on a review of the tremendous losses documented in the Commission's fact finding report." The Cranston bill would also make individual payments before giving money to the community foundation, while the Commission recommended the opposite. Cranston's bill will be introduced June 22, 1983.

As for Japanese American legislators, both Representative

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Norman Mineta (D-Calif.) and Senator Spark Matsunaga (D-Haw.) expressed approval of the recommendations but were waiting before taking further action. According to aides, Matsunaga wanted to see the results of Congressional hearings on the recommendations, while Mineta was discussing with colleagues the possible support of legislation prior to its introduction in the House.

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UPDATE, 6/21/83: Rep. Mike Lowry has agreed to drop the heirs provision from his bill and to reduce the individual redress amount to \$20,000. Because his bill and the Cranston bill are now identical, except that Cranston's includes no set individual redress amount, a joint press conference will be held on Wednesday, June 22, 1983 at 10:00 a.m., with both bills to be formally introduced immediately thereafter.

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The author, a sansei attorney who is a member of the Board of Directors of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and a regular writer for the New York Nichibei, recently spent several weeks in Washington, D.C. talking to Congressmen, staff attorneys and legislative aides about redress.

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