

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DON YOUNG
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW
AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

JUNE 20, 1984

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN. I APPRECIATE BEING GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE THIS DISTINGUISHED SUBCOMMITTEE AND EXPRESS MY VIEWS ON LEGISLATION TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMISSION ON WARTIME RELOCATION. I COMMEND YOU AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE FOR YOUR EFFORT TO FULLY CONSIDER THE LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS TO IMPLEMENT THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS.

AS ONE OF THE ORIGINAL COSPONSORS OF THE LEGISLATION WHICH CREATED THE RELOCATION COMMISSION, I APPRECIATED THE DILLIGENCE SHOWN BY THE COMMISSION IN THOROUGHLY RESEARCHING THE RELOCATION AND INTERNMENT OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES DURING WORLD WAR TWO. THIS WAS A DANGEROUS AND DIFFICULT TIME IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY. ANYONE CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF LOOKING BACK AT THOSE TIMES IS FACED WITH HARD CHOICES IN WEIGHING THE CONFLICTING INTERESTS OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN WARTIME, PRIVATE PROPEPTY RIGHTS, INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY, AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A GOVERNMENT TO COMPENSATE INDIVIDUALS FOR LOSSES MANY YEARS AFTER THOSE LOSSES OCCURRED.

NO MATTER HOW HARD THIS TASK IS, I BELIEVE IT IS THE OBLIGATION OF A FAIR AND JUST GOVERNMENT TO REPAY CITIZENS FOR PROPERTY TAKEN BY THAT GOVERNMENT, EVEN WHERE THE MOTIVE IS TO PROTECT THE NATION IN TIME OF WAR.

THE OBLIGATION TO REPAY INNOCENT CITIZENS FOR PROPERTY TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT IS NOT LOST SOLELY THROUGH THE PASSAGE OF TIME. IT REMAINS OUR OBLIGATION.

IN ORDER TO MEET THIS RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALASKA' NATIVE CITIZENS WHO WERE INTERNED AND RELOCATED DURING THE WAR, THE RELOCATION COMMISSION MADE SEVERAL RECOMMENDATIONS SEPARATE FROM THOSE FOR JAPANESE-AMERICANS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. THE RECOMMENDATIONS FORMED THE BASIS FOR THE PROVISIONS OF THE LEGISLATION I HAVE INTRODUCED TO COMPENSATE RESIDENTS OF THE ALEUTIAN CHAIN WHO WERE RELOCATED AND THE SURVIVORS OF THOSE WHO DIED WHILE INTERNED.

THE BILL I HAVE INTRODUCED, H.R. 4322, WAS DEVELOPED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE ELDERS OF THE 7 VILLAGES OF THE AREA, MOST OF WHOM ARE SURVIVORS OF THE RELOCATION CAMPS. THE BILL HAS THE STRONG SUPPORT OF THOSE WHO SUFFERED DIRECT LOSSES DURING THE INTERNMENT.

THE LEGISLATION CALLS FOR A PER CAPITA PAYMENT TO EACH SURVIVING RESIDENT OF THE ALEUTIAN AND PRIBILOF ISLANDS WHO WAS RELOCATED AND INTERNED DURING THE WAR. 350 INDIVIDUALS ARE ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THESE PAYMENTS.

THE BILL ALSO CALLS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TRUST FUND TO MEET THE COMMUNITY NEEDS OF THESE ISOLATED VILLAGES. THIS FUND IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE FOR THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO DID NOT SURVIVE THE YEARS OF INTERNMENT.

OTHER PROVISIONS ARE DESIGNED TO REPLACE CHURCH PROPERTY AND CLEAN UP DANGEROUS WARTIME DEBRIS STILL FOUND ON THE ISLANDS.

MR. CHAIRMAN, TOMMOROW, YOU AND THE MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE WILL HEAR FROM A NUMBER OF WITNESSES WHO WILL DESCRIBE THE HARDSHIPS, SUFFERING AND LOSSES ENDURED BY CITIZENS INTERNED DURING THE WAR. I WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE THESE EXPERIENCES ON BEHALF OF THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED. THE EXPERIENCES ARE TOO PERSONAL, THE LOSSES TOO GREAT, AS WERE SO MANY OTHERS FOR ALL AMERICANS DURING WORLD WAR II.

I WOULD LIKE TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT COMPENSATION TO CITIZENS WHO WERE INTERNED DOES NOT IN ANY WAY REDUCE OUR RESPECT FOR ALL THOSE WHOSE SACRIFICES ALLOWED US TO WIN THE WAR AND REMAIN A NATION OF FREEDOM AND LIBERTY. BUT IT IS FROM RESPECT FOR THAT FREEDOM AND LIBERTY THAT OUR GOVERNMENT SHOULD REPAY CITIZENS FOR PROPERTY FORCIBLY TAKEN DURING THE WAR.

FOR THE RESIDENTS OF ALASKA WHO FACED THE UNIQUE SITUATION OF BEING THE ONLY U.S. TERRITORY INVADED AND OCCUPIED DURING THE WAR, THE RELOCATION LEFT MANY VILLAGES DESERTED AND ABANDONED IN AN AREA WITH ONE OF THE HARSHEST CLIMATES IN THE WORLD. RESIDENTS FORCED TO ABANDON THEIR HOMES AND PPROPERTY WOULD RETURN THREE YEARS LATER WITH ONLY THE SHELLS OF HOMES REMAINING. THE EVACUATION MAY HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIABLE DUE TO THE INVASION OF THE ISLANDS. HOWEVER, A GOVERNMENT WHICH TAKES PROPERTY FROM INNOCENT CIVILIANS, AS WELL AS LIBERTY, SHOULD REPAY THOSE CITIZENS WHO ACTED IN ONLY IN GOOD FAITH.

AS THE MEMBERS OF THIS DISTINGUISHED SUBCOMMITTEE WELL
KNOW FROM CONSIDERING PRIVATE RELIEF LEGISLATION
SIMILAR TO THIS TYPE OF RELOCATION COMPENSATION, A BASIC
PRINCIPLE OF JUSTICE IN A FREE SOCIETY IS THAT GOVERNMENT
SHOULD COMPENSATE INDIVIDUALS WHO ACT IN GOOD FAITH
AND WHOSE RIGHTS ARE TAKEN BY THAT GOVERNMENT.

WE TOOK THE RIGHTS THE RESIDENTS OF THE ALEUTIAN CHAIN
DETAINED DURING THE WAR. IN JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS, I
BELIEVE WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THOSE RIGHTS AND PROVIDE
COMPENSATION.

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMEN.