My dear Mr. President:

Recently you sent to the Navy Department, during my absence, copy of a letter to you from Elmer Davis dealing with the subject of Japanese, who are American citizens, and who were evacuated from the Pacific Coast. On this letter you asked for our recommendations. I would regard it as unwise and unnecessary that you make any statement on the two bills presented in Congress dealing with the evacuated Japanese, one of which proposes to deprive citizenship and the other which proposes to intern them for the duration of the war.

I do not think either of these bills has any chance of passage and I do not regard either of them of sufficient importance to warrant a statement from you.

The feeling in the Navy Department with respect to the enlistment in the Navy of citizens of Japanese descent is adverse to such action. The maximum of use which we could make in the Navy of people of this character might be in a civilian capacity in the Intelligence service.

I do not regard this particular problem set forth in Mr. Davis's letter as anywhere near as important as the problem of dealing with the Japanese in the Hawaiian Islands and, concerning this latter problem, nothing, apparently, is being done despite the fact that there is a very large number of Japanese sympathizers, if not actual Japanese agents, still at large in the population of Oahu, who, in the event of an attack upon these islands, would unquestionably cooperate with our enemies. I still believe very earnestly that some steps should be taken to separate the loyal from the disloyal in that population. I think this is far more important than the other matter.

Sincerely yours,

Frank Knox

The President

The White House