

May 24, 1943

Dear Mr. Congressman:

I am in receipt of your letter of May 21, with the enclosed resolution by the Lions Club of Long Beach, California, on the subject of Japanese returning to the West Coast.

While I have followed the Japanese matter on the Coast very closely and originally took a detailed interest in the adoption of the policy and the details connected with the movement of those of Japanese descent from the Western Defense Command areas, I now act merely as one of the officials in the War Department who deal with War Department matters related to the relocation of Japanese-American citizens. The action which permitted American citizens of Japanese descent who had become soldiers in the Army to return on their first furlough after their induction into the Army to the Western Defense Command was taken by the Chief of Staff and after careful consideration by a number of officials in the Department.

As I have indicated, the War Department and the Army was responsible for evacuating the Japanese from the West Coast and placing them in relocation centers in the first instance. That evacuation from the West Coast was never intended to imply mass disloyalty, but it was based on military considerations arising from the great and immediate threat to the West Coast and the lack of time available to examine into individual cases. I notice that the Lions Club resolution which you enclosed recognizes that there are individuals of Japanese ancestry who are loyal citizens of the United States, and evidence which comes to me from time to time of the loyalty of many of these citizens is simply too strong to ignore. It does not seem appropriate that these loyal citizens should receive the punishment or be subjected to the restrictions imposed upon the disloyal.

The War Department has no present plan which would permit even those who after very careful investigation are found to be loyal to the United States to return to their former homes on the West Coast. However, it has permitted, after consultation with General DeWitt, soldiers of Japanese extraction, when in uniform and on furlough, to

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visit any locality in the prohibited zone of the West Coast. There may be a few other cases pending where we have no doubt of the loyalty of the individual in cases of mixed marriages and where the War Department is willing to raise its restrictions, but apart from these individual cases, as I say, the War Department has not consented to any return.

As for the soldiers, the War Department has taken, in my judgment, the only position which it could sensibly and fairly take. Citizens who have volunteered to fight for their country, whose loyalty has been found satisfactory by Federal agencies, and who have been accepted by the Army, must be treated just as any other soldiers who protect this country. There are relatively few men involved in any case, and certainly it is rather fantastic to say that the military security of the West Coast is impaired by this temporary reintroduction of a few men of this character into the area.

There has been some suggestion that on this point there was some difference of view between the War Department and General DeWitt. I have been in the closest touch with General DeWitt on all matters relating to the Japanese on the West Coast, and he has been entirely in accord with the principles stated by the War Department. As you know, I believe, the policies of relocation are not in the hands of the War Department at all. They repose in the War Relocation Authority and the War Department has no responsibility for the relocation of people of Japanese descent except as it involves strictly military considerations. There may be social, economic, and other factors which enter into the determination of when and whether these people should return to the West Coast or anywhere else in the United States, and in what number. The War Department has felt that there are still military considerations which make it unwise to return any large group to sensitive areas of the West Coast, but its only connection with the matter is on the basis of strictly military considerations.

I suggest that, if you have not done so, you communicate with Mr. Dillon Myer of the War Relocation Authority and convey to him your views and those of your constituents.

Sincerely,

(SIGNED) JOHN J. McCLOY

JOHN J. McCLOY  
Assistant Secretary of War

Honorable Ward Johnson, M. C.  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C.

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