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NARS, Date 7/8/93

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ASW 014.311 WDC ~~EXCLUDED~~
PERMITS TO ENTER LINE

4 December 1944

Mr. Dillon S. Myer, Director
War Relocation Authority
Room 822, Barr Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Myer:

Attached is a copy of a statement which General Reber will present to the Congressmen this afternoon, together with a copy of some notes which have been prepared for his information in connection with some questions which may be asked.

Will you please return them when they have served your purpose.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

HARRISON A. GERHARDT
Colonel, General Staff Corps
Executive to Asst. Secretary of War

X X

Enc.
Statement and notes.

Rel'd 4 Dec 44 by Sgt. McConnell

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WNN by ERC 3-30-71

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ASW 014.311 WDC Exclusion Program

Permits to Enter Home

STATEMENT

I assume you are interested in determining the status of the Japanese exclusion program. I assume also that you are interested in all aspects of our Japanese problem - its social and economic aspects as well as its military aspects. At the outset I want to make it clear that the Army can only consider the military aspects of the question. You are all familiar with the reasons why the Army evacuated persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast. Those reasons were military reasons. As you are doubtless aware, that program was instituted at a time when an attack on the West Coast was a definite probability and an invasion on a large scale had to be considered as a real possibility. In view of the difficulties of making an immediate determination of which persons of Japanese ancestry were loyal and which were not, mass exclusion of persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast was a necessary military precaution.

The military necessity which was presented by this emergency affords the legal basis for the action which was taken. It was the basis on which the Supreme Court, in the Hirabayashi case, upheld one of the measures which preceded exclusion, the curfew for persons of Japanese ancestry. The initial evacuation program in 1942 is now before the Court

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in the Korematsu case and we hope it will be sustained on the basis of the opinion in the Hirabayashi case. It also is clear from that opinion, however, that continued mass exclusion can be sustained only so long as military necessity requires it.

We are a lot further along in the war today than we were at the time that the evacuation was ordered. The war has moved a good deal closer to Japan and, although there is a lot of fighting still to be done, it can no longer be said that the West Coast is in danger of large scale invasion. At the same time it has been possible to get some information about our Japanese population and to make some progress in separating those who are apt to be dangerous from those who are loyal to this country. One of the first steps in this direction was taken by the Army in selecting those persons of military age among the Japanese who were acceptable for the Army, initially as volunteers and later under Selective Service. The good record which Japanese troops have made in all theaters of war has shown that sound judgments of this kind can be exercised.

As a result of these considerations I think it is clear that the mass exclusion of persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast will be continued only so long as the military situation requires. When this will be is a military question as to which no advance assurances can be given except the assurance that when the Commanding General of the Western

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evacuees as were permitted to return to the West Coast would do so on an orderly and gradual basis. My attention has also recently been directed to a statement of Governor Warren of California that if the military authorities decide that military necessity no longer requires the continued mass exclusion of persons of Japanese descent from the West Coast areas, the civilian authorities of California will cooperate in that decision.

I realize also that many persons may say there is a possibility that disorders might occur if persons of Japanese descent are permitted to return to the West Coast. The War Department is interested in this question because any serious trouble might result in retaliation against American soldiers who are held as prisoners of war by the Japanese. If the military authorities determine that military considerations no longer require mass exclusion of persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast, we have every faith that the people on the West Coast will show their good citizenship by abiding by this judgment, and will prevent any acts of discrimination against any of these people who may be permitted to return. I hope that if any of these people are permitted to return:

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