

CHAPTER 13

The Internment of Japanese-Americans: Executive Order 9066



Gullion }
Bendetsen } lawyers in uniform
McClay }
Stimson }
Roosevelt
Press
Calif. people

Chapter 13 The Internment of Japanese-Americans: Executive Order 9066

The first two documents illustrate the mood and attitudes prevalent at the time of the internment. The first is taken from the testimony presented by Earl Warren before a congressional committee meeting in San Francisco in 1942. Today Warren is best remembered as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1953 to 1969, and as a staunch defender of civil rights. In 1942, however, he was California's attorney general and a future candidate for governor. In response to questioning regarding the civil rights of Japanese-Americans, he replied, "I believe, sir, that in time of war every citizen must give up some of his normal rights." Even if one accepts such a belief, would it excuse the treatment of Japanese-Americans during the war?

The second document is from Justice Hugo Black's majority opinion in the case of *Korematsu v. United States* (1944). After reading the accounts of removal and relocation in the essay, evaluate justice Black's statement that it is "unjustifiable to call [the relocation centers] . . . concentration camps" and his assertion that "to cast this case into outlines of racial prejudice, without reference to the real military dangers which were present, merely confuses the issue."

Since the end of the war, racial attitudes toward Japanese-Americans, as well as other minorities, have considerably improved in the United States. In the case of Japanese-Americans, their outstanding military service during the war no doubt aided their acceptance by other Americans. The 442d Regimental Combat Team, composed almost entirely of Japanese-Americans, suffered enormous casualties in Italy and was the most decorated unit in the war.

The final document, a proclamation by President Gerald Ford in 1976, expresses the nation's regret over the wartime miscarriage of justice. Proposals to compensate financially those Japanese-Americans who were interned have yet to be approved by Congress, however. Have racial attitudes evolved enough so that Americans will abide by President Ford's resolve "that this kind of error shall never be made again"?

During World War II, the United States government removed from their homes 110,000 West Coast immigrant and native-born Japanese and interned them in stark, isolated "relocation centers." The essay in this chapter is excerpted from "Personal Justice Denied," a 1984 report written by a group of scholars for the federal Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. It examines the events and arguments leading up to President Franklin Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 9066, under which Japanese-Americans were ordered from their homes and housed in government camps. The report also details the conditions that prevailed in the relocation centers. In reading the essay, consider why the internment occurred and the roles that wartime hysteria, greed, and racism may have played in it.

ESSAY

Personal Justice Denied Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians

At dawn on December 7, 1941, Japan began bombing American ships and planes at Pearl Harbor. The attack took our forces by surprise. Japanese aircraft carriers and warships had left the Kurile Islands for Pearl Harbor on November 26, 1941, and Washington had sent a war warning message

indicating the possibility of attack upon Pearl Harbor, the Philippines, Thailand or the Malay Peninsula. Nevertheless, the Navy and Army were unprepared and unsuspecting. After a few hours of bombing, Japan had killed or wounded over 3,500 Americans. Two battleships were destroyed, four others sunk or run aground; a number of other vessels were destroyed or badly damaged. One hundred forty-nine American airplanes had been destroyed. Japan lost only 29 planes and pilots.

That night President Roosevelt informed his Cabinet and Congressional leaders that he would seek a declaration of war. On December 8 the President addressed a joint session of Congress and expressed the nation's outraged shock at the damage which the Japanese had done on that day of infamy. The declaration of war passed with one dissenting vote. Germany and Italy followed Japan into the war on December 11.

At home in the first weeks of war the division between isolationists and America Firsters, and supporters of the western democracies, was set aside, and the country united in its determination to defeat the Axis powers. Abroad, the first weeks of war sounded a steady drumbeat of defeat, particularly as the Allies retreated before Japanese forces in the Far East. On the same day as Pearl Harbor, the Japanese struck the Malay Peninsula, Hong Kong, Wake and Midway Islands, and attacked the Philippines, destroying substantial numbers of American aircraft on the ground near Manila. The next day Thailand was invaded and within days two British battleships were sunk off Malaysia. On December 13 Guam fell, and on Christmas the Japanese captured Wake Island and occupied Hong Kong. In the previous seventeen days, Japan had made nine amphibious landings in the Philippines. General Douglas MacArthur, commanding Army forces in the islands, evacuated Manila on December 27, withdrew to the Bataan Peninsula, and set up headquarters on Corregidor. With Japan controlling all sea and air approaches to Bataan and Corregidor, after three months the troops isolated there were forced to surrender unconditionally in the worst American defeat since the Civil War. On February 27 the battle of the Java Sea resulted in another American naval defeat with the loss of thirteen Allied ships. In January and February 1942, the military position of the United States in the Pacific was bleak indeed. Reports of American battlefield deaths gave painful personal emphasis to the war news.

Pearl Harbor was a surprise. The outbreak of war was not. In December 1941 the United States was not in the state of war-readiness which those who anticipated conflict with the Axis would have wished, but it was by no means unaware of the intentions of Japan and Germany. The President had worked for some time for Lend-Lease and other measures to support the western democracies and prepare for war. In 1940, he had broadened the political base of his Cabinet, bringing in as Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, the publisher of the Chicago *Daily News* who had been Alfred M.

Landon's vice-presidential candidate in 1936. Roosevelt drafted as Secretary of War one of the most distinguished Republican public servants of his time, Henry L. Stimson, who had served as Secretary of War under Taft and Secretary of State under Hoover. Stimson, who brought with him the standing and prestige of half a century of active service to his country, carried a particularly impressive weight of principled tradition. He brought into the War Department other, younger easterners, many of whom were fellow lawyers and Republicans. John J. McCloy came from a prominent New York law firm to become first a Special Assistant and then Assistant Secretary for War, and after the outbreak of war he was the civilian aide to Stimson responsible for Japanese American questions. Roosevelt later named Francis Biddle, a Philadelphian who was a firm defender of civil rights, as Attorney General when Robert Jackson was appointed to the Supreme Court.

Ten weeks after the outbreak of war, on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which gave to the Secretary of War and the military commanders to whom he delegated authority, the power to exclude any persons from designated areas in order to secure national defense objectives against sabotage and espionage. The order was used, as the President, his responsible Cabinet officers and the West Coast Congressional delegation knew it would be, to exclude persons of Japanese ancestry, both American citizens and resident aliens, from the West Coast. Over the following months more than 100,000 people were ordered to leave their homes and farms and businesses. "Voluntary" resettlement of people who had been branded as potentially disloyal by the War Department and who were recognizable by their facial features was not feasible. Not surprisingly, the politicians and citizens of Wyoming or Idaho believed that their war industries, railroad lines and hydroelectric dams deserved as much protection from possible sabotage as did those on the Pacific Coast, and they opposed accepting the ethnic Japanese. Most of the evacuees were reduced to abandoning their homes and livelihoods and being transported by the government to "relocation centers" in desolate interior regions of the west.

As the Executive Order made plain, these actions were based upon "military necessity." The government has never fundamentally reviewed whether this massive eviction of an entire ethnic group was justified. In three cases the Supreme Court reviewed the Executive Order in the context of convictions for violations of military orders issued pursuant to it, but the Court chose not to review the factual basis for military decisions in wartime, accepting without close scrutiny the government's representation that exclusion and evacuation were militarily necessary. Forty years later, the nation is sufficiently concerned about the rights and liberties of its citizens and residents, that it has undertaken to examine the facts and pose to itself the question of whether, in the heat of the moment — set by defeat

and fearful of the future, it justly took the proper course for its own protection, or made an original mistake of very substantial proportion. "Peace hath her victories/No less renowned than war."

Was a policy of exclusion militarily justified as a *precautionary measure*? This is a core initial question because the government has conceded at every point that there was no evidence of actual sabotage, espionage or fifth column activity among people of Japanese descent on the West Coast in February 1942. The Commanding General of the Western Defense Command, John L. DeWitt, put the point plainly, conceding in his recommendation to the War Department "[t]he very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date." The Justice Department, defending the exclusion before the Supreme Court, made no claim that there was identifiable subversive activity. The Congress, in passing the Japanese-American Evacuation Claims Act in 1948, reiterated the point:

[D]espite the hardships visited upon this unfortunate racial group by an act of the Government brought about by the then prevailing military necessity, there was recorded during the recent war not one act of sabotage or espionage attributable to those who were the victims of the forced relocation.

Finally, the two witnesses before the Commission [on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians] who were most involved in the evacuation decision, John J. McCloy and Karl R. Bendetsen, who was first liaison between the War Department and the Western Defense Command and later General DeWitt's chief aide for the evacuation, testified that the decision was not taken on the basis of actual incidents of espionage, sabotage or fifth column activity.

One may begin, then, by examining the competent estimates of possible future danger from the ethnic Japanese, citizen and alien, on the West Coast in early 1942. This is not to suggest that a well-grounded suspicion is or should be sufficient to require an American citizen or resident alien to give up his house and farm or business to move hundreds of miles inland, bearing the stigma of being a potential danger to his fellow citizens—not that such suspicion would justify condemnation of a racial group rather than individual review—but it does address the analysis that should be made by the War Department charged with our continental defenses. . . .

The intelligence services have the task of alerting and informing the President, the military and those charged with maintaining security about whether, where and when disruptive acts directed by an enemy may be expected. Intelligence work consists predominantly of analytical estimate, not demonstrably comprehensive knowledge—there may always be another, undiscovered ring of spies or a completely covert plan of sabotage.

Caution and prudence require that intelligence agencies throw the net of suspicion wide, and take measures to protect vital information or militarily important installations. At the same time, if intelligence is to serve the ends of a society which places central value on personal liberty, even in time of war, it must not be overwhelmed by rumors and flights of fancy which grip a fearful, jittery public. Above all, effective intelligence work demands sound judgment which is immune to the paranoia that treats everyone as a hostile suspect until his loyalty is proven. In 1942, what credible threat did Japan pose to the internal peace and security of the United States?

It was common wisdom that the Nazi invasions of Norway and Western Europe had been aided by agents and sympathizers within the country under attack—the so-called fifth column—and that the same approach should be anticipated from Japan. For this reason intelligence was developed on Axis saboteurs and potential fifth columnists as well as espionage agents. This work had been assigned to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Navy Department but not to the War Department. The President had developed his own informal intelligence system through John Franklin Carter, a journalist, who helped Roosevelt obtain information and estimates by exploiting sources outside the government. None of these organizations operated with the thoroughness of, say, the modern CIA, but they were the best and calmest eyes and ears the government had.

Each of these sources saw only a very limited security risk from the ethnic Japanese; none recommended a mass exclusion or detention of all people of Japanese ancestry. . . .

Under General DeWitt's guidance from the Presidio [of San Francisco, Army Headquarters on the West Coast], the War Department moved toward the momentous exclusion of American citizens from the West Coast without any thoughtful, thorough analysis of the problems, if any, of sabotage and espionage on the West Coast or of realistic solutions to those problems. In part there was an easy elision between excluding Issei* and Nisei.* The legal basis for excluding aliens was essentially unquestioned; no rigorous analysis of military necessity was needed because there were no recognized interests or rights to weigh against the interest in military security that was served by moving enemy aliens. The very word "Japanese," sometimes used to denote nationality and at other times to indicate ethnicity, allowed obvious ambiguities in discussing citizens and resident aliens. The War Department came toward the problem with a few major facts: the Japanese were winning an incredible string of victories in the Far East; the West Coast was lightly armed and defended, but now appeared

*First-generation Japanese Americans
**Second-generation Japanese Americans

far more vulnerable to Japanese raid or attack than it had been before Pearl Harbor—although General Staff estimates were that the Japanese could not make a sustained invasion on the West Coast. But after the surprise of Pearl Harbor, laymen, at least, doubted the reliability of military predictions: it was better to be safe than sorry. And laymen had a great deal to say about what the Army should do on the West Coast. . . .

It was the voices of organized interests, politicians and the press on the West Coast that DeWitt heard most clearly—and the War Department too. The first weeks after Pearl Harbor saw no extensive attacks on the ethnic Japanese, but through January and early February the storm gathered and broke. The latent anti-Japanese virus of the West Coast was brought to life by the fear and anger engendered by Pearl Harbor, stories of sabotage in Hawaii and Japan's victories in Asia. Among private groups the lead was typically taken by people with a long history of anti-Japanese agitation and by those who feared economic competition. It is difficult . . . to recreate the fear and uncertainty about the country's safety which was generally felt after Pearl Harbor; it is equally impossible to convey . . . the virulence and breadth of anti-Japanese feeling which erupted on the West Coast in January and February of 1942.

On January 2 the Joint Immigration Committee sent a manifesto to California newspapers which summed up the historical catalogue of charges against the ethnic Japanese. It put them in the new context of reported fifth column activity in Hawaii and the Philippines and a war that turned the Japanese into a problem for the nation, not California alone. Repeating the fundamental claim that the ethnic Japanese are "totally unassimilable," the manifesto declared that "those born in this country are American citizens by right of birth, but they are also Japanese citizens, liable . . . to be called to bear arms for their Emperor, either in front of, or behind, enemy lines." Japanese language schools were attacked as "a blind to cover instruction similar to that received by a young student in Japan—that his is a superior race, the divinity of the Japanese Emperor, the loyalty that every Japanese, wherever born, or residing, owes his Emperor and Japan." In these attacks the Joint Immigration Committee had the support of the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West and the California Department of the American Legion, which in January began to demand that "all Japanese who are known to hold dual citizenship . . . be placed in concentration camps." By early February, Earl Warren, then Attorney General of California, and U.S. Webb, a former Attorney General and co-author of the Alien Land Law, were actively advising the Joint Immigration Committee how to persuade the federal government that all ethnic Japanese should be removed from the West Coast. . . .

These traditional voices of anti-Japanese agitation were joined by economic competitors of the Nikkei [Japanese-Americans]. The Grower-Shippers

per Vegetable Association was beginning to find a voice in January, although its bluntest statement can be found in a *Saturday Evening Post* article in May:



We're charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons. We might as well be honest. We do. It's a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown man. They came into this valley to work, and they stayed to take over. . . . If all the Japs were removed tomorrow, we'd never miss them in two weeks, because the white farmers can take over and produce everything the Jap grows. And we don't want them back when the war ends, either.

Through January and early February, the Western Growers Protective Association, the Grower-Shippers, and the California Farm Bureau Federation all demanded stern measures against the ethnic Japanese. All assured the newspapers and politicians to whom they wrote that the removal of the ethnic Japanese would in no way harm or diminish agricultural production.

This wave of self-assured demands for a firm solution to the "Japanese problem" encountered no vigorous, widespread defense of the Issei and Nisei. Those concerned with civil liberties and civil rights were silent. For instance, a poll of the Northern California Civil Liberties Union in the spring of 1942 showed a majority in favor of the evacuation orders.

West Coast politicians were not slow to demand action against ethnic Japanese. Fletcher Bowron, reform mayor of Los Angeles, went to Washington in mid-January to discuss with Attorney General Biddle the general protection of Los Angeles as well as the removal of all ethnic Japanese from Terminal Island in Los Angeles Harbor. By February 5, in a radio address, the Mayor was unequivocally supporting mass evacuation. In the meantime, all Nisei had been removed from the city payrolls. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors fired all its Nisei employees and adopted a resolution urging the federal government to transport all Japanese aliens from the coast. Following Los Angeles, 16 other California counties passed formal resolutions urging evacuation; Imperial County required the fingerprinting, registration and abandoning of farming by all enemy aliens; San Francisco demanded suppression of all Japanese language newspapers. Portland, Oregon, revoked the licenses of all Japanese nationals doing business in the city. The California State Personnel Board ordered all "descendants" of enemy aliens barred from civil service positions, and Governor Olson authorized the State Department of Agriculture to revoke the produce-handling licenses of enemy aliens. Attorney General Warren found these measures unlawful, but he sympathized with their basic aim, laboring to persuade federal officials that the military should remove ethnic Japanese from what Warren thought sensitive areas on the West Coast.

In Washington, most West Coast Congressmen and Senators began to express similar views. Congressman Leland Ford of Los Angeles taking the early lead. On January 16, 1942, he wrote the Secretaries of War and Navy and the FBI Director informing them that his California mail was running heavily in favor of evacuation and internment:

I know that there will be some complications in connection with a matter like this, particularly where there are native born Japanese, who are citizens. My suggestions in connection with this are as follows:

1. That these native born Japanese either are or are not loyal to the United States.

2. That all Japanese, whether citizens or not, be placed in inland concentration camps. As justification for this, I submit that if an American born Japanese, who is a citizen, is really patriotic and wishes to make his contribution to the safety and welfare of this country, right here is his opportunity to do so, namely, that by permitting himself to be placed in a concentration camp, he would be making his sacrifice and he should be willing to do it if he is patriotic and is working for us. As against his sacrifice, millions of other native born citizens are willing to lay down their lives, which is a far greater sacrifice, of course, than being placed in a concentration camp. . . .

This clamor for swift, comprehensive measures against the ethnic Japanese both reflected and was stimulated by the press. In December the West Coast press had been comparatively tolerant on the issue of the Nikkei, but by January more strident commentators were heard. John B. Hughes, who had a regular Mutual Broadcasting Company program, began a month-long series from Los Angeles which steadily attacked the ethnic Japanese, spreading rumors of espionage and fifth column activity and even suggesting that Japanese dominance of produce production was part of a master war plan.

Nurtured by fear and anger at Japanese victories in the Far East and by eagerness to strike at the enemy with whom the Nisei were now identified, calls for radical government action began to fill letters to the editor and newspaper commentary. Private employers threw many ethnic Japanese out of their jobs, while many others refused to deal with them commercially. Old stereotypes of the "yellow peril" and other forms of anti-Japanese agitation provided a ready body of lore to bolster this pseudo-patriotic cause. By the end of January the clamor for exclusion fired by race hatred and war hysteria was prominent in California newspapers. Henry McLemore, a Hearst syndicated columnist, published a vicious diatribe:

I am for immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast to a place deep in the interior. I don't mean a nice part of

the interior either. Herd 'em up, pack 'em off and give 'em the inside room in the badlands. Let 'em be pinched, hurt, hungry and dead up against it. . . .

Personally, I hate the Japanese. And that goes for all of them.

By the end of January the western Congressional delegation and many voices in the press and organized interest groups were pressing for evacuation or internment of aliens and citizens. The Presidio at San Francisco listened, and by January 31, General DeWitt had embraced the Representatives' view that all enemy aliens and dual citizens should be evacuated and interned; action should be taken at the earliest possible date "even if they [the aliens and dual citizens] were temporarily inconvenienced." . . .

In the face of . . . demands for evacuation and the recommendation of his Secretary of War, Roosevelt was not likely to reconsider his decision. Nevertheless, on February 17 Attorney General Biddle sent a memorandum to the President in the guise of a briefing paper for a press conference. . . .

For several weeks there have been increasing demands for evacuation of all Japanese, aliens and citizens alike, from the West Coast states. A great many of the West Coast people distrust the Japanese, various special interests would welcome their removal from good farm land and the elimination of their competition, some of the local California radio and press have demanded evacuation, the West Coast Congressional Delegation are asking the same thing and finally, Walter Lippman [sic] and Westbrook Pegler recently have taken up the evacuation cry on the ground that attack on the West Coast and widespread sabotage is imminent. My last advice from the War Department is that there is no evidence of imminent attack and from the F.B.I. that there is no evidence of planned sabotage.

I have designated as a prohibited area every area recommended to me by the Secretary of War, through whom the Navy recommendations are also made. . . .

We are proceeding as fast as possible. To evacuate the 93,000 Japanese in California over night would materially disrupt agricultural production in which they play a large part and the farm labor now is so limited that they could not be quickly replaced. Their hurried evacuation would require thousands of troops, tie up transportation and raise very difficult questions of resettlement. Under the Constitution 60,000 of these Japanese are American citizens. If complete confusion and lowering of morale is to be avoided, so large a job must be done after careful planning. The Army has not yet advised me of its conclusion in the matter.

There is no dispute between the War, Navy, and Justice Departments. The practical and legal limits of this Department's authority which is restricted to alien enemies are clearly understood.

The Army is considering what further steps it wishes to recommend.

It is extremely dangerous for the columnists, acting as "Armchair Strategists and Junior G-Men," to suggest that an attack on the West Coast and planned sabotage is imminent when the military authorities and the F.B.I. have indicated that this is not the fact. It comes close to shouting FIRE! in the theater; and if race riots occur, these writers will bear a heavy responsibility. Either Lippman [sic] has information which the War Department and the F.B.I. apparently do not have, or is acting with dangerous irresponsibility.

No minds were changed, and by this time the Attorney General was taking coarse and threatening abuse for his unwillingness to join the stampede to mass evacuation. . . .

On February 17 [Secretary of War] Stimson recorded meeting with War Department officials to outline a proposed executive order; General Gullion undertook to have the order drafted that night: "War Department orders will fill in the application of this Presidential order. These were outlined and Gullion is also to draft them." Further, Stimson said, "It will involve the tremendous task of moving between fifty and one hundred thousand people from their homes and finding temporary support and sustenance for them in the meanwhile, and ultimately locating them in new places away from the coast." In short, whatever his views during discussion with the President a few days before, Stimson now contemplated a mass move.

On February 18, 1942, Stimson met about the executive order with Biddle, Ennis, Rowe, and Tom Clark of the Department of Justice; and Robert Patterson, Under Secretary of War; McCloy; Gullion; and Bendetsen from the War Department. Stimson wrote:

Biddle, McCloy and Gullion had done a good piece of work in breaking down the issues between the Departments the night before, and a draft of a presidential executive order had been drawn by Biddle based upon that conference and the preceding conference I had had yesterday. We went over them. I made a few suggestions and then approved it. This marks a long step forward towards a solution of a very dangerous and vexing problem. But I have no illusions as to the magnitude of the task that lies before us and the walls which will go up in relation to some of the actions which will be taken under it.

The Attorney General remembered the tenor of the meeting somewhat differently, but, writing in his autobiography, agreed about the result:

Rowe and Ennis argued strongly against [the Executive Order]. But the decision had been made by the President. It was, he said,

a matter of military judgment. I did not think I should oppose it any further. The Department of Justice, as I had made it clear to him from the beginning, was opposed to and would have nothing to do with the evacuation.

In Los Angeles on the night of February 19, the United Citizens Federation, representing a wide range of pro-Nisei interests, held its first meeting of more than a thousand people. Plans were laid to persuade the press, the politicians and the government that their attacks upon the ethnic Japanese were unfounded. It was too late.

Earlier in the day, President Roosevelt had signed Executive Order 9066. The Order directed the Secretary of War and military commanders designated by him, whenever it was deemed necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas "with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion." There was no direct mention of American citizens of Japanese descent, but unquestionably the Order was directed squarely at those Americans. A few months later, when there was talk of the War Department using the Executive Order to move Germans and Italians on the East Coast, the President wrote Stimson that he considered enemy alien control to be "primarily a civilian matter except of course in the case of the Japanese mass evacuation on the Pacific Coast."

The next day, to underscore the government's new-found unity on this decision, Attorney General Biddle sent to the President's personal attention a memorandum justifying the Executive Order and its broad grant of powers to the military. . . .

This authority gives very broad powers to the Secretary of War and the Military Commanders. These powers are broad enough to permit them to exclude any particular individual from military areas. They could also evacuate groups of persons based on a reasonable classification. The order is not limited to aliens but includes citizens so that it can be exercised with respect to Japanese, irrespective of their citizenship.

The decision of safety of the nation in time of war is necessarily for the Military authorities. Authority over the movement of persons, whether citizens or noncitizens, may be exercised in time of war. . . . This authority is no more than declaratory of the power of the President, in time of war, with reference to all areas, sea or land.

The President is authorized in acting under his general war powers without further legislation. The exercise of the power can meet the specific situation and, of course, cannot be considered as any punitive measure against any particular nationalities. It is

rather a precautionary measure to protect the national safety. It is not based on any legal theory but on the facts that the unrestricted movement of certain racial classes, whether American citizens or aliens, in specified defense areas may lead to serious disturbances. These disturbances cannot be controlled by police protection and have the threat of injury to our war effort. A condition and not a theory confronts the nation.

After the decision, there was no further dissent at the highest levels of the federal government. The War Department stood behind the facts and the Justice Department stood behind the law which were the foundation of the Executive Order. . . .

WRA [the War Relocation Authority] had to move quickly in finding centers to house 120,000 people and in developing policies and procedures for handling the evacuees soon to come under its jurisdiction. The President had stressed the need for immediate action; both the War Department and the WRA were anxious to remove the evacuees from the primitive, makeshift assembly centers.

Selecting the sites for the relocation centers proved complicated. Two sites had been chosen by military authorities before the WRA was born. Eight more locations were needed—designed to be “areas where the evacuees might settle down to a more stable kind of life until plans could be developed for their permanent relocation in communities outside the evacuated areas.” Site selection required the War Department and the WRA to agree, although each had different interests. The WRA retained the portion of its early plan that called for large-scale agricultural programs in which evacuees would clear, develop and cultivate the land. Thus, the centers had to be on federal land so that improvements would become a public benefit. The Army, now face-to-face with the actual movement of people, no longer advocated freedom of movement outside the Western Defense Command. It became concerned about security and insisted that sites be located at a safe distance from “strategic installations,” a term that included power lines and reservoirs. The Army also wanted each camp to have a population of at least 5,000 so that the number of guards could be minimized. To be habitable, the centers had to have suitable transportation, power and water facilities. By June 5, after considering 300 proposed sites and negotiating with many potentially affected state and local government officials, the WRA chose the final eight sites.

More than any other single factor, the requirement for large tracts of land virtually guaranteed that the sites would be inhospitable. As [historian] Roger Daniels explained it: “That these areas were still vacant land in 1942, land that the ever-voracious pioneers and developers had either passed by or abandoned, speaks volumes about their attractiveness.”

The sites were indeed unattractive. Manzanar [California] and Poston [Arizona], selected by the Army, were in the desert. Although both could

eventually produce crops, extensive irrigation would be needed, and Poston’s climate was particularly harsh. Six other sites were also arid desert. Gila River, near Phoenix, suffered almost as severely from the heat. Minidoka [Idaho] and Heart Mountain [Wyoming], the two northernmost centers, were known for hard winters and severe dust storms. Tule Lake [California] was the most developed site; located in a dry lake bed, much of it was ready for planting. Topaz [Utah] was covered in greasewood brush. Granada [Colorado] was little better, although there was some provision for irrigation. The last two centers—Rohwer and Jerome in Arkansas—were entirely different. Located in swampland, the sites were heavily wooded, with severe drainage problems. . . .

Having selected the sites, the WRA’s second job was to develop the policies and procedures that would control the lives of evacuees. This was begun almost immediately, with help from the JACL*. In his April 6 letter to Eisenhower,** Masaoka set forth a long list of recommendations for regulating life in the camps and stressed, among other things, the importance of respecting the citizenship of the Nisei, protecting the health of elderly Issei, providing educational opportunities, and recognizing that the evacuees were “American” in their outlook and wanted to make a contribution to the war effort. The first set of policies issued May 29 were labelled by the Director “tentative, still fairly crude, and subject to immediate change.” Further, they did not reach the centers until three weeks after the first groups had arrived. They were not clarified until August, when over half the evacuee population had been transferred to the centers. Given the limited time available and the novelty of WRA’s task as both jailer and advocate for the evacuees, it is not surprising that the agency was not fully prepared. Still, the fact that WRA was not able to provide dependable answers to basic questions about how the centers would be managed probably fed the disaffection that increasingly characterized reactions to the relocation centers.

The confluence of diverse political interests had again conspired against the evacuees. The new centers at which they were arriving were barely an improvement over the assembly centers they had left. The increased freedom and possible resettlement they had anticipated had been reversed in favor of confinement. And the rules that would govern their lives were uncertain or non-existent. . . .

Except at Manzanar, which was built as an assembly center and transferred to the WRA for use as a relocation center, all the relocation camps were built from scratch. Thus, the design and facilities were relatively standard. By agreement with the WRA, the camps were built by the War

*[Japanese-American Citizens League, headed by Bill Masaoka]

**Milton Eisenhower was in charge of the camps during their operation.]

Department according to its own specifications. Barbed-wire fences, watchtowers, and armed guards surrounded the residential and administrative areas of most camps.

The military police and administrative personnel had separate quarters, more spacious and better furnished. At most centers, evacuees built the administrative housing, which had not been included in the original construction contracts. At Topaz, Gladys Bell and her family, who were with the administrative staff, had an entire four-room barrack complete with piano. At Manzanar, staff houses were painted and had residential cooling systems, refrigerators, indoor toilets and baths.

Arrangements for the evacuees were not comparable. The basic organizational unit was once again the "block," consisting of about 12 to 14 barracks, a mess hall, baths, showers, toilets, a laundry and a recreation hall. Each barrack was about 20 by 100 to 120 feet, divided into four or six rooms, each from 20 by 16 to 20 by 25 feet. Each room housed at least one family, even if the family was very large. Even at the end of 1942, in 928 cases, two families shared a 20 by 25-foot room.

Construction was of the kind used to house soldiers overseas—the so-called "theatre of operations" type, modified somewhat to accommodate women and children. The barracks were built of planks nailed to studs and covered with tarpaper. In some places the green wood warped quickly, cracking walls and floors. Congressman Leland Ford said of the Manzanar barracks that "on dusty days, one might just as well be outside as inside." "So much of our work was done sloppily," Dean Meeker testified of Heart Mountain:

I can remember the foreman's comment when he found cracks in the building. He said, "Well, I guess those Japs will be stuffing their underwear in there to keep the wind out."

In my defense, I will say I applied a bit more diligence and care to my work when I realized people would actually have to survive a Wyoming winter in this housing. We all knew that there was no way anyone accustomed to California weather could possibly survive a Wyoming winter in those barracks. If they were from California, they probably didn't even own the proper clothing for a winter in Cody.

No inside walls or ceilings were included in the original plans. As part of winterization program, however, evacuee construction crews eventually added firboard ceilings and inside walls in many of the centers.

A visiting reporter from *The San Francisco Chronicle* described quarters at Tule Lake:

Room size—about 15 by 25, considered too big for two reporters.
Condition—dirty.

Contents—two Army cots, each with two Army blankets, one pillow, some sheets and pillow cases (these came as a courtesy from the management), and a coal-burning stove (no coal). There were no dishes, rugs, curtains, or housekeeping equipment of any kind. (We had in addition one sawhorse and three pieces of wood, which the management did not explain.)

The furnishings at other camps were similar. At Minidoka, arriving evacuees found two stacked canvas cots, a pot-bellied stove and a light bulb hanging from the ceiling; at Topaz, two blankets, a pot-bellied stove and some cotton mattresses. Rooms had no running water, which had to be carried from community facilities. Running back and forth from the laundry room to rinse and launder soiled diapers was a particular inconvenience. . . .

Others, however, found not even the minimal comforts that had been planned for them. An unrealistic schedule combined with wartime shortages of labor and materials meant that the WRA had difficulty meeting its construction schedule. In most cases, the barracks were completed, but at some centers evacuees lived without electric light, adequate toilets or laundry facilities. . . .

Mess halls planned for about 300 people had to handle 600 or 900 for short periods. Three months after the project opened, Manzanar still lacked equipment for 16 of 36 messhalls. At Gila:

There were 7,700 people crowded into space designed for 5,000. They were housed in messhalls, recreation halls, and even latrines. As many as 25 persons lived in a space intended for four.

As at the assembly centers, one result was that evacuees were often denied privacy in even the most intimate aspects of their lives. . . . Even when families had separate quarters, the partitions between rooms failed to give much privacy. Gladys Bell described the situation at Topaz:

[T]he evacuees . . . had only one room, unless there were around ten in the family. Their rooms had a pot-bellied stove, a single electric light hanging from the ceiling, an Army cot for each person and a blanket for the bed. Each barrack had six rooms with only three flues. This meant that a hole had to be cut through the wall of one room for the stovepipe to join the chimney of the next room. The hole was large so that the wall would not burn. As a result, everything said and some things whispered were easily heard by people living in the next room. Sometimes the family would be a couple with four children living next to an older couple, perhaps of a different religion, older ideas and with a difference in all ways of life—such as music.

Despite these wretched conditions the evacuees again began to rebuild their lives. Several evacuees recall "foraging for bits of wallboard and wood" and dodging guards to get materials from the scrap lumber piles to build shelves and furniture. . . . Eventually, rooms were partitioned and shelves, tables, chairs and other furniture appeared. Paint and cloth for curtains and spreads came from mail order houses at evacuee expense. Flowers bloomed and rock gardens emerged; tree and shrubs were planted. Many evacuees grew victory gardens. One described the change:

[W]hen we entered camp, it was a barren desert. When we left camp, it was a garden that had been built up without tools, it was green around the camp with vegetation, flowers, and also with artificial lakes, and that's how we left it.

The success of evacuees' efforts to improve their surroundings, however, was always tempered by the harsh climate. In the western camps, particularly Heart Mountain, Poston, Topaz and Minidoka, dust was a principal problem. Monica Sone described her first day at Minidoka:

[W]e were given a rousing welcome by a dust storm. . . . We felt as if we were standing in a gigantic sand-mixing machine as the sixty-mile gale lifted the loose earth up into the sky, obliterating everything. Sand filled our mouths and nostrils and stung our faces and hands like a thousand darting needles. Henry and Father pushed on ahead while Mother, Sumi and I followed, hanging onto their jackets, banging suitcases into each other. At last we staggered into our room, gasping and blinded. We sat on our suitcases to rest, peeling off our jackets and scarves. The window panels rattled madly, and the dust poured through the cracks like smoke. Now and then when the wind subsided, I saw other evacuees, hanging on to their suitcases, heads bent against the stinging dust. The wind whipped their scarves and towels from their heads and zipped them out of sight.

In desert camps, the evacuees met severe extremes of temperature as well. In winter it reached 35 degrees below zero and summers brought temperature as high as 115°. Because the desert did not cool off at night, evacuees would splash water on their cots to be cool enough to sleep. Rattlesnakes and desert wildlife added danger to discomfort.

The Arkansas camps had equally unpleasant weather. Winters were cold and snowy while summers were unbearably hot and humid, heavy with chiggers and clouds of mosquitos. . . .

The WRA walked a fine line in providing for evacuees' basic needs. On the one hand was their genuine sympathy for the excluded people. On the other was a well-founded apprehension that the press and the politicians would seek out and denounce any evidence that evacuees were

being treated generously. WRA's compromise was to strive for a system that would provide a healthy but Spartan environment. They did not always succeed, and it was usually the evacuees who suffered when they failed.

The meal system was institutional—food served in messhalls at designated times. Lines were long and tables crowded. Special arrangements were made for infants, the sick or elderly, but, as in most institutions, they were developed from necessity, not convenience. There were formula kitchens for the babies, to which their mothers brought them at designated times; some mothers walked many "blocks" as often as six times a day to get their infants fed when the camps first opened. Others bought hot plates to make formula, but without running water this system was almost as unsatisfactory. The arrangements for those on restricted diets were difficult. The diet kitchens were often located in the administration complex, far from the residential area; the sick and the elderly had to walk as much as a mile three times a day to get their special food.

Food quality and quantity varied among centers, generally improving in the later months as evacuees began to produce it themselves. The WRA's expressed policy was that evacuees were entitled to the same treatment as other American citizens: WRA was to provide an adequate diet; foods rationed to the public would be available to evacuees in the same quantities. The reality, however, was very different. Wieners, dry fish, rice, macaroni and pickled vegetables are among the foods evacuees recall eating most frequently. Meatless days were regular at some centers—two or three times a week, and many items were unavailable. Continuing dairy shortages meant that, at most centers, fluid milk was served only to those with special needs, while at others, there was watery skim milk. In fact, no really appetizing meals could be produced regularly under a requirement that feeding the evacuees could not cost more than rations for the Army, which were set at 50 cents per person per day. Actual costs per evacuee were approximately 45 cents per person per day; sometimes they fell as low as 31 cents.

In January 1943, after accusations that evacuees were being coddled, the WRA adopted new policies which showed that their fear of adverse publicity had overcome any humanitarian impulse. "At no time would evacuees' food have higher specifications than or exceed in quantity what the civil population may obtain in the open market." Centers were ordered to submit their planned menus for each 30-day period to Washington for advance approval to make sure that the public was adequately informed of WRA feeding policies and procedures. Perhaps the best that can be said of the meal system is that no one starved.

No one froze either. As winter approached, many evacuees were unprepared, either because they had brought no warm clothing due to baggage limitations or because they did not own such clothing—ever having

needed it at home. In response, the WRA provided monthly clothing allowances and distributed surplus clothing. Each employed evacuee and his or her dependents were supposed to receive from \$2 to \$3.75 each month, depending on the evacuee's age and the climate of the center. The system, however, did not work well because the shorthanded WRA assigned it to an inexperienced, overworked staff, which was unable to handle the additional workload, and delays continually frustrated evacuees at the mercy of the WRA for their survival. The surplus distribution became the principal source of warm clothing during the first winter, when need was greatest. The clothes were old GI peajackets and uniforms, sizes 38 to 44. However unattractive, they were warm and a source of great amusement. . . .

Discontent over camp living conditions was inevitable. Housing and food were poor. Suspicion that staff was stealing and selling food was widespread. Wages and clothing allowances were delayed. For many older residents, there were no jobs. WRA had promised that household goods would be brought to evacuees as soon as they arrived; months later, none had come. They were continual shortages of equipment and material for education and recreation. WRA had promised that one of its first jobs would be to build schools and furnish school equipment, but priority often went instead to improving quarters for WRA personnel.

Fear, uncertainty and the monotony of enforced idleness aggravated tension. At the older centers, WRA policies had not been set when evacuees arrived, and there were no answers to many of their questions. They feared the future—not only what would happen after the war, but also whether there would be enough food or quality medical care at the centers. Many had lost income and property, which left them few resources to fall back on. They feared the "outside." Relations with outside communities were poor, and evacuees knew that some towns had passed resolutions against the free movement of evacuees. Local communities and politicians had investigated the camps for evidence of "coddling."

Evacuees feared and resented the changes forced by life in the centers, particularly the breakdown of family authority, created in part by a situation in which children no longer depended so heavily on their parents. Family separation was common, and mass living discouraged normal communication and family activity. Perhaps most difficult, the position of the head of the family had been weakened. No longer the breadwinner providing food and shelter, he had been supplanted by the government; his authority over the family and his ability to lead and discipline were diminished. Children unsettlingly found their parents as helpless as they.

At the root of it all, evacuees resented being prisoners against whom no crime was charged and for whom there was no recourse. Armed guards patrolled their community and searched their packages. No evacuee could have a camera. Even beer was prohibited. For a long time, no evacuee

could leave the center, except for emergency reasons, and then only in the company of someone who was not of Japanese ancestry. Evacuee positions were subordinate to WRA personnel, regardless of ability, and wages were low. At some centers, project officials actively tried to maintain class and role distinctions, forbidding WRA personnel and evacuees to eat in the same messhall, for example. . . .

DOCUMENTS

In Support of Evacuation, 1942

ATTORNEY GENERAL WARREN. For some time I have been of the opinion that the solution of our alien enemy problem with all its ramifications, which include the descendants of aliens, is not only a Federal problem but is a military problem. We believe that all of the decisions in that regard must be made by the military command that is charged with the security of this area. I am convinced that the fifth-column activities of our enemy call for the participation of people who are in fact American citizens, and that if we are to deal realistically with the problem we must realize that we will be obliged in time of stress to deal with subversive elements of our own citizenship. . . .

A wave of organized sabotage in California accompanied by an actual air raid or even by a prolonged black-out could not only be more destructive to life and property but could result in retarding the entire war effort of this Nation far more than the treacherous bombing of Pearl Harbor.

I hesitate to think what the result would be of the destruction of any of our big airplane factories in this State. It will interest you to know that some of our airplane factories in this State are entirely surrounded by Japanese land ownership or occupancy. It is a situation that is fraught with the greatest danger and under no circumstances should it ever be permitted to exist. . . .

Unfortunately, however, many of our people and some of our authorities and, I am afraid, many of our people in other parts of the country are of the opinion that because we have had no sabotage and no fifth column activities in this State since the beginning of the war, that means that none have been planned for us. But I take the view that that is the most ominous sign in our whole situation. It convinces me more than perhaps any other factor that the sabotage that we are to get, the fifth column activities that we are to get, are timed just like Pearl Harbor was

SOURCE: Testimony of Earl Warren, U.S. Congress, House Select Committee Investigating National Defense, San Francisco Hearing, 77th Cong., 2d sess., 11009–10

timed and just like the invasion of France, and of Denmark, and of Norway, and all of those other countries. . . .

I want to say that the consensus of opinion among the law-enforcement officers of this State is that there is more potential danger among the group of Japanese who are born in this country than from the alien Japanese who were born in Japan. That might seem an anomaly to some people, but the fact is that, in the first place, there are twice as many of them. There are 33,000 aliens and there are 66,000 born in this country.

In the second place, most of the Japanese who were born in Japan are over 55 years of age. There has been practically no migration to this country since 1924. But in some instances the children of those people have been sent to Japan for their education, either in whole or in part, and while they are over there they are indoctrinated with the idea of Japanese imperialism. They receive their religious instruction which ties up their religion with their Emperor, and they come back here imbued with the ideas and the policies of Imperial Japan. . . .

We believe that when we are dealing with the Caucasian race we have methods that will test the loyalty of them, and we believe that we can, in dealing with the Germans and the Italians, arrive at some fairly sound conclusions because of our knowledge of the way they live in the community and have lived for many years. But when we deal with the Japanese we are in an entirely different field and we cannot form any opinion that we believe to be sound. . . .

MR. [JOHN] SPARKMAN. I have noticed suggestions in newspaper stories. I noticed a telegram this morning with reference to the civil rights of these people. What do you have to say about that?

ATTORNEY GENERAL WARREN. I believe, sir, that in time of war every citizen must give up some of his normal rights.

Exclusion and Internment Upheld, 1944

The petitioner, an American citizen of Japanese descent, was convicted in a federal district court for remaining in San Leandro, California, a "Military Area," contrary to Civilian Exclusion Order No. 34 of the Commanding General of the Western Command, U.S. Army, which directed that after May 9, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry should be excluded from that area. No question was raised as to petitioner's loyalty to the United States. . . .

Like curfew, exclusion of those of Japanese origin was deemed necessary because of the presence of an unascertained number of disloyal

members of the group, most of whom we have no doubt were loyal to this country. It was because we could not reject the finding of the military authorities that it was impossible to bring about an immediate segregation of the disloyal from the loyal that we sustained the validity of the curfew order as applying to the whole group. In the instant case, temporary exclusion of the entire group was rested by the military on the ground. The judgment that exclusion of the whole group was for the same reason a military imperative answers the contention that the exclusion was in the nature of group punishment based on antagonism to those of Japanese origin. That there were members of the group who retained loyalties to Japan has been confirmed by investigations made subsequent to the exclusion. Approximately five thousand American citizens of Japanese ancestry refused to swear unqualified allegiance to the United States and to renounce allegiance to the Japanese Emperor, and several thousand evacuees requested repatriation to Japan. . . .

It is said that we are dealing here with the case of imprisonment of a citizen in a concentration camp solely because of his ancestry, without evidence or inquiry concerning his loyalty and good disposition towards the United States. Our task would be simple, our duty clear, were this a case involving the imprisonment of a loyal citizen in a concentration camp because of racial prejudice. Regardless of the true nature of the assembly and relocation centers—and we deem it unjustifiable to call them concentration camps with all the ugly connotations that term implies—we are dealing specifically with nothing but an exclusion order. To cast this case into outlines of racial prejudice, without reference to the real military dangers which were presented, merely confuses the issue. Korematsu was not excluded from the Military Area because of hostility to him or his race. He was excluded because we are at war with the Japanese Empire, because the properly constituted military authorities feared an invasion of our West Coast and felt constrained to take proper security measures, because they decided that the military urgency of the situation demanded that all citizens of Japanese ancestry be segregated from the West Coast temporarily, and finally, because Congress, reposing its confidence in this time of war in our military leaders—as inevitably it must—determined that they should have the power to do just this. There was some evidence of disloyalty on the part of some, the military authorities considered that the need for action was great, and time was short. We cannot—by availing ourselves of the calm perspective of hindsight—now say that at that time these actions were unjustified.

An American Promise, 1976

By the President of the United States of America: A Proclamation

February 19 is the anniversary of a very, very sad day in American history. It was on that date in 1942 that Executive Order 9066 was issued resulting in the uprooting of many, many loyal Americans. Over 100,000 persons of Japanese ancestry were removed from their homes, detained in special camps, and eventually relocated.

We now know what we should have known then—not only was that evacuation wrong but Japanese-Americans were and are loyal Americans. On the battlefield and at home the names of Japanese-Americans have been and continue to be written in America's history for the sacrifices and the contributions they have made to the well-being and to the security of this, our common Nation.

Executive Order 9066 ceased to be effective at the end of World War II. Because there was no formal statement of its termination, there remains some concern among Japanese-Americans that there yet may be some life in that obsolete document. The proclamation [4417] that I am signing here today should remove all doubt on that matter.

I call upon the American people to affirm with me the unhyphenated American promise that we have learned from the tragedy of that long ago experience—forever to treasure liberty and justice for each individual American and resolve that this kind of error shall never be made again.