

# Recommendations bring hostile response

By Mike Feinsilber  
The Associated Press

Washington — Some Americans are up in arms over the thought of a national apology to the people of Japanese ancestry who were put in detention camps after the attack on Pearl Harbor 41 years ago.

"The most absurd idea you guys in Washington ever came up with, and you've had some great ones," a World War II veteran from Tampa, Fla., wrote the Commission on War-time Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which has proposed an apology and redress in the form of a \$20,000 payment to each of the approximately 60,000 internees who remain alive.

All told, 120,000 were put in the camps, some for 2½ years or more. The commission called the episode "a grave injustice."

In reaction, the panel says it got 60 to 70 letters, most of them negative. Some of the

letters are blatantly racist, but most offered the argument that under the circumstances the internment was warranted.

"The relocation action in 1942 was a sound and logical reaction to an enemy attack and does not require an apology," wrote a Californian who had been a prisoner of Nazi Germany in World War II. "Where is the commission to reward those who fought for their government?"

Some of the correspondents make the point that injustice is an inevitable by-product of war. "It was an unfair and an un-American thing to do, but it should be considered one of the many evils of war," one wrote.

A couple from Texas told of being imprisoned by the Japanese in Manila: "There then followed 37 months of brutality, deprivation and degradation that is so well documented that it need not be re-

peated here. At the end of that time we were brought back to the states and let off the train at Newton, Kan. with one suit of clothes and a suitcase each and no job to make our way back into civil life in a wartime economy as best we could.

"Since the United States government has not seen fit to give, or offer, compensation for our imprisonment and brutal treatment, nor force the Japanese government to do so, it does not seem reasonable to recommend compensation for the Japanese, Japanese-Americans or their descendants, for far less arduous but better publicized treatment."

Many of the writers made no distinction between the people of Japan and people of Japanese ancestry living in this country. Two-thirds of the internees were U.S. citizens; the others were legal residents.

"Their war caused their own

inconvenience," one correspondent said. Another, a former American prisoner of war in Germany, said that when the war ended everyone in Germany claimed to have been anti-Nazi all along.

"I feel the same way about the Japanese-Americans," he wrote. "If the tide of battle had gone the other way, there would have been an entirely different story."

Others argued that the commission was luxuriating in hindsight.

Wrote a Texan: "That the Japanese-Americans had no part in 'fifth column' activities speaks well for their patriotism but did not diminish the government's duty to ensure

that such was the case."

"After the devastating blow that had been dealt the United States at Pearl Harbor," a Michigan resident wrote, "there was not time to stand back and wait to see if there would be acts of espionage, etc. that might be perpetrated by persons whose loyalty may still have been to Japan. He (President Franklin D. Roosevelt) acted as any responsible leader should have."

Another viewpoint in the commission's mail was that detention in remote camps spared the internees from a vengeful American public.

"Sure they suffered in the war, but so did we all!" said a letter from New Mexico.