

House Votes Payments for Japanese Internees

Bill Would Give \$20,000 to Each Individual and Require U.S. to Apologize for Detaining Them

By KAREN TUMULTY, *Times Staff Writer*

WASHINGTON—The House, evoking recollections of guilt and humiliation still vivid after four decades, overwhelmingly approved legislation Thursday that would require the government to apologize to the Japanese-Americans it sent to internment camps during World War II and pay each living internee \$20,000.

Debate on the measure has been emotional and extraordinarily personal. Rep. Norman Y. Mineta (D-San Jose) recalled himself as a typical American 10-year-old in 1942 who wore his Cub Scout uniform as he boarded the railroad car that would carry his family to three years of internment.

'Burden of Shame'

While held at an internment camp in Wyoming, he would meet another Scout from nearby Cody—a boy who grew up to become Sen. Alan K. Simpson (R-Wyo.). Simpson, now a sponsor of similar legislation in the Senate, recalled that it had been "rather puzzling to me" on visits to the camp to see young prisoners "who wore the same Scout uniform, had the same merit badges, told the same stories."

Mineta said the legislation could "finally lift the unjust burden of shame that 120,000 Americans have carried for 45 painful years." It was passed by the House 243 to 141, with support from both liberals and conservatives.

The companion bill is expected to sail through the Senate in the next few months, but the legislation faces stiff opposition from the White House. The Office of Management and Budget has said it will recommend a presidential veto be-

cause of objections to the \$1.2 billion in payments.

Supporters noted that the timing of the vote was poignantly symbolic, scheduled by the House leadership to coincide with the bicentennial of the signing of the U.S. Constitution. Republican Ben Blaz, Guam's delegate to Congress, said it would allow the country "to celebrate the 200th anniversary of our Constitution with a clear conscience."

Opponents insisted that, while an apology is due the internees, giving

Please see INTERNEES, Page 30

INTERNEES: House Approves Payments, U.S. Apol

Continued from Page 1

a flat payment to each of the estimated 60,000 still alive is a bad idea.

Rep. Daniel E. Lungren (R-Long Beach) said the measure subscribed to the "misguided notion that the dollar sign is the only genuine symbol of contrition." Noting the heavy burden that the federal deficit already puts on future taxpayers, Rep. Bill Frenzel (R-Minn.) said the measure is an attempt to "purge ourselves of somebody else's guilt with another generation's money."

Lungren offered an amendment to delete the \$20,000 payments, but it failed, 237 to 152.

Critics cited what they said were several other flaws in the bill. They pointed out that it would offer the same payment to each internee—regardless of whether the incarceration had been for only a few months or for several years; regardless of whether the person had been an infant who today has no memory of the experience, or an adult who does and was forced to abandon a business and home.

They also said it would set a

dangerous precedent. Rep. Norman D. Shumway (R-Stockton), a leading opponent, asked whether it should follow that the government offer compensation to black schoolchildren who suffered from segregated schools or convicts who did not receive the now-required recitation of their rights when arrested.

Finally, opponents said, it amounts to an effort to reshape history with today's values. "Remember Pearl Harbor. That was not hysteria. It was an act of war," Rep. Samuel S. Stratton (D-N.Y.) argued. "Franklin Roosevelt did

the right thing, and if he hadn't done it, he would have been probably lynched."

Amid what the legislation describes as "wartime hysteria" after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt ordered Japanese-Americans to be moved away from areas near this country's Western shores. Roosevelt had military intelligence that indicated—falsely, it was later learned—that Japan had numerous agents among this country's Japanese-American population.

Families often were uprooted with almost no notice. Rep. Robert

T. Matsui (D-Sacramento) recalled an infant when his parents were reared in Sacramento, and spent 72 hours to prepare to be taken like cattle" to camps. They lost their home and produce business.

"In 1942, their lives and futures were shattered and recalled emotionally. The specter of disloyalty haunted them so, Matsui said, that his father was not able to talk about this subject for 40 years."

Ironically, many Japanese-Americans were wearing their country's uniform into battle. "relatives waited for the

U.S. Apology

T. Matsui (D-Sacramento) was an infant when his parents, born and reared in Sacramento, were given 72 hours to prepare to be "herded like cattle" to camps. They gave up their home and produce business.

"In 1942, their lives and their futures were shattered," Matsui recalled emotionally. The shame and "specter of disloyalty" haunted them so, Matsui said, that "my father was not able to talk about this subject for 40 years."

Ironically, many Japanese-Americans were wearing this country's uniform into battle while "relatives waited for them at home

behind barbed wire," Rep. David E. Bonior (D-Mich.) noted. The bill was enrolled as House Resolution 442 in honor of the Japanese-American 442nd Army Regimental Combat Team. Among the regiment's heavily decorated members was now-Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii), who during the war lost his right arm and his dreams of becoming a surgeon.

A number of former internees have filed legal claims for reparation, including a class-action suit currently pending before a federal appeals court. According to the bill, anyone accepting the \$20,000 payment would forfeit any other monetary claims against the government.

In 1948, the government estab-

lished a procedure under which internees could file claims for property lost because of the relocation.

However, only \$38 million was paid in compensation. A presidential commission in 1983 estimated that this amount failed to cover between \$108 million and \$164 million in lost income and between \$41 million and \$206 million in lost property. Inflated to 1983 dollars, those losses would reach between \$810 million and \$2 billion.

Another provision of the bill would require the Justice Department to review criminal convictions of Japanese-Americans who refused to accept what they saw as discriminatory treatment and to recommend them for presidential pardons where justified.