

July 14 In Washington D.C.--

6/1/84

Date of 1st Commission Hearing Set

WASHINGTON.—The first hearing of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians will be convened by commission chairperson Joan Z. Bernstein on Tuesday, July 14 and will run through Thursday, July 16, it was announced today by CWRIC executive director Paul T. Bannai.

In an interview with The Rafu Shimpo today, Bannai said the Washington, D.C. hearings, first in a series of five to be held in selected cities throughout the United States this summer, will be held in the Senate Caucus Room, the site of the Senate's Water-gate Hearings and the site of numerous historic gatherings.

"Friends" to Raise Funds for Old-Age Home

Butch Kasahara and other talented performers will provide the entertainment for the 200 residents and patients of the Japanese Retirement Home and the Intermediate Care Facility during the annual "Friends of JRH" Picnic and Drawing, Saturday, June 6 at 11:30 a.m. on the grounds of the old-age facility, 325 S. Boyle Ave.

The "Friends" will provide free lunches to the residents of the home. More than 100 family members and 200 guests are expected to attend the outdoor affair.

A gift-giveaway featuring cash prizes will be held during the program. Profits derived from the event are earmarked for a project to structurally-reinforce some of the JRH buildings against earthquake damage.

Appears Doomed and Project Costly

project at a meeting in Bonn on June 23-24.

He said the three firms are looking into the possibility of working together to complete

The Washington hearing, along with others tentatively scheduled for Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago and Alaska, will investigate the World War II displacement of Alaskan Aleuts from their Pribiloff Island homes and the imprisonment in U.S. concentration camps of some 110,000 Americans of Japanese descent. Created by Public Law 96-317, the nine-member commission will gather facts during the hearing process and deliver legal and other remedies for the government's wartime acts in a report to be submitted to Congress early next year.

Bannai explained that the commissioners wanted to hold the first hearing in Washington in order to begin their work before the 97th Congress breaks for a summer recess. He said the logic behind such a move was to set a proper historical setting for the rest of the hearings and to draw press attention to the work of the commission.

Bannai said that he has sent President Ronald Reagan and former chief executives, Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, invitations to attend the first hearing.

The commission director explained that the first day's testimony probably would be centered around the government's role in the evacuation and internment orders. Bannai, a former California state assemblyman, said initial testimony would come from appropriate representatives of the WWII War and State Departments and also from the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

"We hope to gain the testimony of people who've never told their story for the record," Bannai said of the prospective government witnesses, adding, "We'll try to get as much of the story behind the camps as we can, even if it means using the subpoena powers that we have."

Bannai, who was named to the commission director's position only last month, admitted that many of the details of how the subsequent hearings will be conducted are still in planning stages.

"We will give as many people we can the chance to speak," emphasized the Nisei director.

"We recently got our computer in and are in the process of feeding in the names of people who have applied to speak," said Bannai.

He said the commissioners have decided to limit the number of hearings to five because of budget constraints. Tentatively, hearings will be convened in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle during the month of August. The Chicago hearing and the session devoted to the Aleutian experience in Alaska will meet in September, according to Bannai.

Asked who would be allowed to speak at the hearings, Bannai, repeated, "We'll try to give time to as many as we possibly can. We're looking to get a cross-section of testimony. We don't want to hear all positive or all negative, and we'll try to get organizations wishing to testify to name spokesmen for the hearings."

Bannai said the hearings would be gaveled to order as early as 9 a.m. in the morning and would continue on until 7 or 8 p.m. at night if necessary. He said each of the hearings would be longer than one-day to enable people living in outlying areas to testify conveniently.

Although he said he does not foresee the first commission hearings being "bilingual," Bannai stated that translators would be available for witnesses whose first language was one other than English. On the possibility of holding some of the later hearings in English and Japanese, Bannai said the commission would "play it by ear" and act according to need.

The director said he is still in the process of hiring a staff. On the commission agenda for June is a briefing of the commissioners on the experiences of the targeted populations during WWII. This briefing will take place in mid-June, he said.

Bannai said the commission is still accepting applications to testify at the first hearing. All inquiries should be addressed: Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, 726 Jackson Place, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20506, Room 2020.

—DWIGHT CHUMAN