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Los Angeles, Aug. 16--U.S. Senator Alan Cranston (D., Calif.) said today that second only to slavery, the internment of 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent during World War II was "the single worst mass violation of civil rights and liberties in our nation's history."

He blamed it on race prejudice.

"The exclusion and removal of Japanese Americans resulted from a long history of organized anti-Japanese agitation on the West Coast," Cranston told a Senate subcommittee hearing here.

"No act of espionage, sabotage or fifth column activity had been committed by the Nisei or by the resident Japanese aliens on the West Coast" to justify their being sent to prison camps.

"And American officials knew it," Cranston said.

"The war extracted great sacrifices from all Americans, resulting from necessary measures to defend our country. But the exclusion and internment policy was a hardship imposed exclusively upon Japanese Americans--clearly for racial reasons alone.

"No similar action was taken, for example, against Americans of Italian or German descent although Italy and Germany were also among the Axis powers with whom we were at war."

Cranston testified before a Governmental Affairs subcommittee that is holding field hearings on a redress bill that would grant \$20,000 to each of the 60,000 former inmates of the internment camps who are still living. Some 42,000 reside in California.

Cranston, who is a co-sponsor of the bill, said many evacuees "lost far more than that amount."

He said an independent study showed that the economic damages from business and property losses, plus accumulated lost interest, suffered by internees may have averaged as much as \$180,000 each, for a total of up to \$6.1 billion.

Cranston told the subcommittee of his efforts, as a member of the Office of War Information, to try to dissuade President Franklin D. Roosevelt from carrying out the evacuation order.

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Cranston -- add one

He recalled visiting two of the camps and talking to internees, "including boyhood friends and schoolmates from Los Altos."

"These were people with whom I had learned the 'Pledge of Allegiance,' 'the Star Spangled Banner' and 'America the Beautiful'. Their loyalty to this nation was unquestionable."

Following is the text of Cranston's statement:

I very much appreciate this opportunity to express my support for S.2116, which will provide redress for Japanese Americans and Aleuts interned during World War II by our government. I'm proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation and the author of its forerunner, S. 1520.

I know the distinguished Chairman (Senator Ted Stevens, R., Alaska) is thoroughly familiar with the situation affecting the Aleuts, so many of whom reside in his State. The subcommittee today is concerned with the provisions of this bill providing redress for Japanese Americans.

With the exception of sanctioning human slavery, the removal from their homes and internment of 120,000 American citizens and legal residents of Japanese ancestry by our government in 1942 merely because of that ancestry, remains the single worst mass violation of civil rights and liberties in our nation's history.

Our government's action violated the very ideals for which this Nation stands and for which it then was fighting. The Founding Fathers -- who had witnessed abuse by government of individuals' rights and freedoms -- crafted a Constitution recognizing that every person has rights and liberties the government is pledged to protect. That is the very essence of the Bill of Rights! When the government fails to honor this commitment, the freedom of all of us is ultimately endangered.

Wartime often sees expedience substituted for reasoned judgment. But no wartime conditions justified the actions taken here.

As you know the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians reported to Congress startling facts about the government's internment policy:

More than two-thirds -- two-thirds! -- of the Japanese American internees were American citizens. The rest were legal U.S. residents, many of whom were barred by discriminatory laws from becoming citizens, despite long residence in our country.

Without justification, they were adjudged collectively guilty and then were collectively punished. Our government, solely on the basis of their Japanese ancestry, excluded them from their homes, businesses and communities on the Pacific Coast. None had the benefit of individual review or any other manifestation of due process of law to determine their loyalty. Suspected criminals, even in wartime, are usually afforded more rights.

No act of espionage, sabotage or fifth column activity had been committed by the Nisei or by the resident Japanese aliens on the West Coast. American officials knew this at the time. Many Japanese Americans were held until December 1944 -- a period of nearly three years -- and more than 18 months after officials privately acknowledged that no military justification existed for continuing the policy.

These are the facts. Because about 70 percent of those affected by this legislation now reside in California, I -- as California's senior Senator -- have a natural interest in this bill. But my personal involvement in seeking justice for these Americans dates back to 1942.

Shortly after Pearl Harbor, I was assigned to the Office of War Information in Washington. I worked closely with Eleanor Roosevelt, Archibald MacLeish and then-Attorney General Francis Biddle in trying to dissuade President Franklin Roosevelt from implementing the evacuation and internment plan.

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Later, after the internment process began, I visited two of the camps. Around the clock, I spent my time inside the barbed wire talking to internees, including boyhood friends from Los Altos, California. These were people with whom I had learned the Pledge of Allegiance, the Star Spangled Banner and America the Beautiful. Their loyalty to this Nation was unquestionable.

I noted the irony of seeing American Nisei soldiers, home on furlough and in uniform, wandering around inside a fenced-in internment camp. These Nisei soldiers were later to return from the battlefields of Europe as the most distinguished and decorated combat unit of the war, and from the Pacific theater as loyal soldiers and military intelligence officers in the fight against Imperial Japan.

Yet, even as they fought for the United States, their parents, wives and children were held in guarded camps by the U.S. government. My friends and former classmates in these camps justifiably felt themselves robbed of their citizenship. Some of those interned were told that internment was for their own protection. But they saw clearly that the machine guns and search lights surrounding their prison faced inward.

The war extracted great sacrifices from all Americans, resulting from necessary measures to defend our country. But the exclusion and internment policy was a hardship imposed exclusively upon Japanese Americans -- clearly for racial reasons alone. No similar action was taken, for example, against Americans of Italian or German descent although Italy and Germany were also among the Axis powers with whom we were at war.

The exclusion and removal of Japanese Americans resulted from a long history of organized anti-Japanese agitation on the West coast. By contrast, in Hawaii the military commander restrained plans for radical measures and treated the ethnic Japanese as loyal residents -- absent specific evidence to the contrary. Only 2,000 ethnic Japanese were taken into custody in Hawaii, versus 120,000 on the Mainland.

Many people suffered losses in the war, as did many Japanese Americans. But only Japanese Americans were forced from their homes, businesses and farms in the continental U.S. and deprived of their freedom by the U.S. government.

Many evacuees lost far more than the amount provided by the redress legislation. An independent study for the Commission found economic losses alone, including interest, may have averaged as much as \$180,000 each, running as high as \$6.2 billion in current dollar value. Many consider this a conservative estimate of the real economic losses. The redress legislation would provide only about a sixth of this amount as compensation.

Since the internment, many who supported it have had second thoughts, including former Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson. Justice William O. Douglas, one of five Supreme Court Justices who, in the Korematsu case, held the evacuation constitutionally permissible, later said the case "was ever on my conscience." Interestingly, enough Justices from the original majority have written that on hindsight, they would have voted differently, to produce a different result.

Chief Justice Earl Warren -- who as California's attorney general had urged evacuation -- summed it up afterwards: "I have since deeply regretted the removal order and my own testimony advocating it, because it was not in keeping with our American concept of freedom and the rights of citizens."

The loss of a citizen's freedom can never be measured adequately in money. But the monetary payment recommended by the Commission and included in this legislation is an essential element to make redress a reality, and to guarantee the sanctity of our precious liberties for our children.

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