

**Minutes of JACL National Board Meeting, Ninth Biennial National Convention,
Denver, CO, Thursday, Feb. 28th, 1946 (pages 2 and 3)**

Joint Meeting of National Board and Regional Office Directors, discussing
"pressing problems."

Present at National Board meeting:

President, Saburo Kido, National Secretary, Mike Masaoka, National Treasurer,
Hito Okada, Shig Ushio, William Yamauchi, Dr. Tom Yatabe. Absent, Tom Iseri,
Ken Matsumoto, James Sakamoto, Tom Shimasaki, Fred Tayama, Walter Tsukamoto.
Regional Office Directors present included Michi Ando, Peter Aoki, Joe Grant
Masaoka, George Minato, Scott Tsuchiya.

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of the various convention committees to express their opinions and to seek clarifications for matters which disturbed their committees, as well as to deal with any special topics which the members desired to present at the time.

This meeting was called to order by President Kido at 4:05 P.M. in the Crystal Room. National Board Members attending the convention, all of the Regional Office Directors, the chairmen and members of the ten convention committees, and interested parties were present. No roll was called.

In order that free discussion might be promoted, it was unanimously agreed that the names of individuals participating would not be listed in the Official Minutes.

A number of committee chairmen protested the lack of time allowed them to prepare their final reports and requested an extension of the deadline. This was denied them, with the explanation that since the National Council was to convene on the morrow the reports had to be ready when they were called up for discussion. The National Secretary announced that he would receive committee reports until midnight.

The National Board was requested to consider a number of pressing problems which were confronting the Japanese community, particularly in the Pacific Northwest and Northern California. These included the official attitude of the J.A.C.L. on Tulalake renunciants, conscientious objectors, and affiliation with other organizations.

It was pointed out that many of the Tulalake people who had been cleared by the Justice Department and who were now "free" were creating an embarrassing situation in Northern California and other sections. It was said that while the Justice Department might have cleared them, the local residents still looked upon them with suspicion, and that often this suspicion was directed against Japanese and Japanese Americans of unquestioned loyalty.

At the same time, it was indicated that some of these Tulalake renunciants were belittling the sacrifices made by Nisei veterans and "calling them suckers". They have been understood to claim that they enjoy every privilege and advantage that other Japanese enjoy today without having "risked anything" for the United States. They have created an intolerable situation which may result in ill will for loyal Japanese Americans. In fact, some have gone so far, it was alleged, that they have informed their local draft boards "to go to hell" and would not serve even if called.

Others questioned the policy of the Pacific Citizen in publicizing the activities of the Tulalake renunciants because, in their opinion, it indicated J.A.C.L. sympathy for their predicament.

This latter feeling, also extended to those of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee who advised Nisei not to respond to their draft calls.

The fact that A. L. Wirin, counsel for J.A.C.L. as well as the A.C.L.U., often acted in behalf of the Tulalake and the Heart Mountain group also came up for criticism.

Strong representations were made by the veterans present that no sympathy whatsoever be shown toward the Tulalake and other such groups, that they be made to face the consequences of their former attitude. They indicated that such actions as those taken by the Tulalake and Heart Mountain "draft dodgers" made their role even more difficult in the Army and tended to negate in part their achievements. It was their consensus that most of those in Tulalake asked for transfer to that camp in order to avoid military service in the Army of the United States and now that the situation in Japan is a difficult one, they desire to remain here in the United States.

It was argued that since these Tulalake "troublemakers" would always be in the forefront of anti-America and anti-J.A.C.L. movements, steps ought to be taken to curb them now. It was also stated that they would serve as a reminder that there were some Japanese who waived in their loyalty to the United States and would always be a source of irritation to local Japanese communities. To avoid such difficulties, it was recommended that J.A.C.L. go on record favoring their deportation immediately. Others recommended that released Tuleans be required to carry on their persons at all times special identification.

One fear expressed was that within a few years when public good will is the lot of all Japanese, these Tuleans would reap the benefits of this public attitude and that there would be no distinctions made between those who stood for principle and those who waived.

To the suggestion that some of the Tuleans might have been subjected to "terrific pressure" while in the relocation centers from the pro-Japan elements to renounce their citizenship, it was pointed out that the original volunteers for the 442nd Combat Team and military intelligence faced even greater pressure from these same elements not to enlist in the United States Army, yet they did so because of their greater faith in the American way. To give the Tulelake renunciants the same consideration as veterans receive is to penalize patriotism and loyalty. One fought for America in spite of intimidation, while the others were either too cowardly or were friendly to Japan's aggressions, one returned veteran declared.

The views of National Headquarters were expressed to the effect that notwithstanding the personal feelings of the Staff, J.A.C.L. would have to abide by the decisions of the Justice Department. Whether we are in sympathy with their rulings or not, it was pointed out, as good Americans, our task was to "go along with them". The delegates were reminded that many J.A.C.L. leaders, including the National President, were "beaten up" in camp by these same elements which now protest their pending "repatriation" to Japan. It was indicated that J.A.C.L. would neither approve nor disapprove of the actions of the Justice Department.

The official attitude of the League, however, was disclosed when it was announced that the J.A.C.L. had refrained from supporting the cases of the renunciants. It was reported that these people had raised some \$75,000 for their campaign to regain their citizenship and to stop deportation. J.A.C.L. will participate in test cases if it becomes apparent that rights of Japanese Americans are being jeopardized. That there were many hardship cases among the renunciants, such as young children who had no voice in the decision of their parents, was brought out. That there were many factors in the individual decisions which J.A.C.L. was not qualified to judge upon was also brought out.

Opinion was against special identification for released Tuleans on the grounds that asking for such discrimination might result in all Issei and Nisei being required to carry some kind of identification papers; and that if one group of Japanese were required to carry such papers, all Japanese could be continually embarrassed by being asked to show whether they were from Tulelake or not.

The editorial and reporter policies of the Pacific Citizen were explained in this light: The Pacific Citizen is a newspaper devoted to reporting the news among all Japanese. The mere fact that a certain story is carried does not constitute an endorsement by either the paper or the J.A.C.L. of the action or parties described. People who are interested in what is happening to the Japanese people, whether it be good or bad, subscribe to the Pacific Citizen. Because its readers have confidence that the paper prints all the news, without fear or favor, the Pacific Citizen must retain that confidence by printing stories on the Tulelake situation even though its staff may not personally be in sympathy with it. Such is the function of an honest newspaper. The delegates were reminded that had all newspapers only printed what was the popular thing during evacuation and relocation, few stories would have been released on the Japanese American situation and the accomplishments of the Nisei soldiers.

It was stated that the renunciants lost their American citizenship at the time that they renounced their allegiance and that their release from Tulelake by the Justice Department did not automatically restore their American citizenship. On this basis, such individuals could not become members of J.A.C.L.

It was also brought out that since Section 1, Article I, of the National By-Laws provides for a solemn oath of allegiance to be taken by each prospective member, and since these Tuleans had violated this oath by their actions during the war, they would not be eligible for League membership.

The question of conscientious objectors and their eligibility for J.A.C.L. membership was deferred for the time being.

In explaining Mr. Wirin's position, it was stated that while he was J.A.C.L.'s national counsel, he often served as private counsel in cases which may have run counter to the general attitude of the League. It was further explained that Mr. Wirin served without compensation and that he had often carried on many cases in behalf of the Japanese community at his own expense. Attorneys of Mr. Wirin's calibre are few and far-between, it was indicated, and J.A.C.L. was fortunate enough to secure his services.

If the League desired to hew to a straight line on all matters and to retain attorneys who would only serve J.A.C.L. and no others, J.A.C.L. would have to be prepared to pay for such services. And to retain men of such ability and talents and interest as Mr. Wirin would prove too burdensome to the League, especially since we are not always engaged in litigation.