

*"The test of a free  
country . . .*



**Dr. Robert Gordon Sproul**

**President of the  
University of California**



*A talk given by Dr. Robert G. Sproul,  
President of the University of California,  
at the California Club in Los Angeles,  
California on June 29, 1944, at a lunch-  
eon meeting of a group interested in the  
Pacific Coast Committee on American  
Principles and Fair Play.*

*... is the security it gives its minorities"*

The Committee on American Principles and Fair Play, of which I am Honorary Chairman, came into existence at a critical moment in American history, and to afford a means for the expression of views of all but unspeakable importance. It did not come into existence to protect, much less to coddle or glorify, the Japanese, but to champion and help to safeguard American democracy. It is not an organization of starry-eyed Utopians, of intemperate lovers of strange peoples, but of hard headed believers in the virtues of the American form of government as expressed by the Founding Fathers in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Its leadership in such persons as Dr. Millikan, Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, and myself may be drawn from the lunatic fringe of American life, but it is not a leadership unacquainted with responsibility or unaware of the score. . . .

In spite of storms of abuse from certain quarters, the Committee has been most successful. Up and down the Pacific Coast, it has attracted a very considerable part of those who are universally respected as leaders in their communities to participate in its activities and to speak out for its cause. On the larger stage of the Nation, its influence has been even more notable, continuous and effective. In the face of honest hysteria and dishonest demagogy, it has affected the policies of our government both in the legislative and executive branches. With the judicial branch its cause is secure because, to put it simply, it is just. . . .

#### **AN EVIL PRECEDENT**

**F**IRST AND FOREMOST, above everything else and for all of the time, the concern of the Committee on American Principles and Fair Play is for the *integrity of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States*. It believes with fervor, with

fanaticism if you will, that whenever and wherever the constitutional guarantees are violated in the treatment of a minority, no matter how unpopular or helpless, the whole fabric of American government is weakened, its whole effectiveness impaired. Each such violation establishes an evil precedent which is inevitably turned against another minority later, and eventually against the very principle on which our Nation is founded, namely, the dignity and worth of the human individual.

Even on this fundamental tenet of its faith, however, the position of the Committee is not doctrinaire or academic. It has recognized from the beginning, and under considerable heckling from its own more intemperate members, that the exigencies of war demand some sacrifice of the ordinary rights of all citizens, often considerable sacrifice, and that concerning certain groups of citizens under certain dangerous conditions extraordinary caution and special treatment are necessary and defensible if not desirable. But the Committee believes firmly that the guarantees of the Bill of Rights should be yielded only in extremity, only by deliberate and conscious act, and only in the cases of dangerous or subversive individuals or groups. All others should have its protection until there is proven need for martial law. As Acton, the great historian of human freedom has said, "The test of a free country is the security it gives to minorities."

#### **SUPPORTED MILITARY**

**T**HE SECOND rock upon which the Committee on American Principles and Fair Play establishes its firm foundation, is the assumption, documented by the experience of man over the centuries, that in time of war, the military organization of a nation, in this country the War Department, deserves ungrudging, unstinted, unflinching support in all matters of military concern. The Committee has followed that policy unswervingly ever since it was established, and has found it sound, although it has always reserved the liberty to question any Government action.

For example, when the Army decided that evacuation of the Japanese from the Pacific Coast was required by military necessity, the Committee dropped immediately the important questions it had been raising, and properly raising, as to whether such treatment of American citizens or even loyal aliens squared with American ideals. But the Committee continues to combat the idea, now being advanced, that evacuation is proof of disloyalty. Moreover, the Committee contends that, since the Army ordered the evacuation, on grounds of military necessity, the Army should likewise decide when the process is to be reversed, and the evacuees allowed to recover gradually their civil rights. When the Army decides that the time has come to take this step, and issues a proclamation as clear as the original orders for the evacuation, the Committee on American Principles and Fair Play will once again cooperate to the limit with the military authorities and the War Department. And it believes that every patriot who prizes his own civil liberties should do the same.

### **DISPERSED RELOCATION**

**T**HERE ARE a number of minor facets of Committee policy, of course, but none which runs counter to the two major principles which I have discussed here today. Of these minor policies, I shall refer only to one, and that one only because it is a fertile source of misrepresentation as to the Committee's attitude. The Committee does not believe that all Japanese who have been evacuated from California should be returned to their homes. On the contrary, it favors the policy of dispersed relocation, which is the policy of the War Relocation Authority. It holds with all sensible Californians that the swarming of persons of one race in a Ghetto or a Little Mexico or Little Tokio, the separation of a minority physically and culturally from the rest of the population is a profound social and political error and a potent breeder of social and political ills. Moreover, it is convinced that there will never be a mass return of evacuees to the West Coast. Half of them, approximately, have already

been located elsewhere, or are likely to be by the end of 1944. In many instances, there is nothing for the others to return to here. Among the Nisei, there is a strong and understandable current of feeling against this area, and many of them have no intention of coming back if they can avoid it. But the *right* of loyal Japanese to come back if they so elect, cannot be denied without a denial of all that America has hitherto meant to racial and religious minorities, of all that is has symbolized for the hopes of humanity. The dream of America will be over when the color of men's skins or other physical characteristics determines the communities in which they may live.

On this most significant issue the Committee on American Principles and Fair Play stands four square, with the President of the United States in his official statement of federal policy on relocation:

"With the segregation of the disloyal evacuees in a separate center, the War Relocation Authority proposes now to redouble its efforts to accomplish the relocation into normal homes and jobs in communities throughout the United States, but outside the evacuated area, of those Americans of Japanese ancestry whose loyalty to this country has remained unshaken through the hardships of the evacuation which military necessity made unavoidable.

### **RIGHT TO RETURN**

**"W**E SHALL restore to the loyal evacuees the right to return to the evacuated area as soon as the military situation will make such restoration feasible. Americans of Japanese Ancestry, like those of many other ancestries, have shown that they can, and want to, accept our institutions and work loyally with the rest of us, making their own valuable contribution to the national wealth and well-being. In vindication of the very ideals for which we are

fighting this war it is important to us to maintain a high standard of fair, considerate, and equal treatment for the people of this minority, as of all other minorities."

This statement, we believe, is to be construed as a solemn pledge spoken by the President in the name of the American people.

## CLEAR THINKING

SO MUCH for the policies of the Committee on American Principles and Fair Play, and now for a word or two on how it sets about to implement those policies. The sole weapon of the Committee is the truth, and the Light of Truth it tries to keep shining before our people, and especially those who determine the acts of our government, brightly and continuously. It seeks to promote cool, clear thinking, especially by the West Coast public, in spite of the distortions of fact and excesses of passion and prejudice which are inevitable in wartime. It helps the public to draw a line sharply between our enemies in Japan, the military criminals for whom no fate is too harsh, no punishment too cruel, and persons of Japanese extraction in the United States, two-thirds of whom are free from any blemish of disloyalty, even under the stress of most discriminatory treatment.

The Committee meets *sweeping generalizations* and *wholly unsupported* charges with documented facts. For example it confronts those who say that the only good Jap is a dead Jap with the extraordinary combat record of the 100th Battalion in Italy, a battalion composed entirely of Nisei privates, with half its officers Nisei, and all of them volunteers. That battalion came out of Salerno and Cassino with three Distinguished Service Crosses, 21 Bronze Stars, 36 Silver Stars, and 900 Purple Hearts—900 out of 1400 wounded in action. Again, for example, it answers the threat that returned white service men would murder persons of Japanese stock if they remained in the United States, by publishing scores of letters from men in the fighting forces, saying, in the words of one of them "Have no

fear that returning soldiers would desire to slit the throats of loyal Japanese at home. . . . We'll do our fighting on the battlefields against our country's enemies, and not on the streets at home against our country's friends."

Finally, the Committee backs every group and every individual that speaks out for sound Americanism and against the evil doctrine that justice and power are synonymous. It supports Seth Millington, Past Grand President of the Native Sons of the Golden West, and former State Commander of the American Legion, when he says to the Commonwealth Club, "I would have all known disloyal Japs sent to the land of the rising sun . . . by the first ship leaving San Francisco. Those who have volunteered for our armed forces I would keep here as part of our population." And the Committee is sympathetic with Mr. Millington's dilemma (but probably not with his solution of it) when he says further, "As to those that cannot be classified as either loyal or disloyal there is a most difficult problem. Under the law they are citizens and have rights."

The Committee endorses even more heartily these statesman-like sentences of Commander Wm. P. Haughton, of the American Legion, Department of California:

## SALUTE NISEI

"NUMEROUS PERSONS of Japanese ancestry are now serving with the armed forces of our country on the battle fronts, and, according to all reports, are serving valiantly and well. We salute all men and women who love this country enough to fight and, if needs be, die for it. Every person good enough to fight for us is entitled to our respect and equal protection under the Constitution." These words are a stinging rebuke to those patrioteers who, Nazi-like, would have us substitute a caste system based on race and color for the democratic principles of human worth and equality under the law. We cannot interpret them, or the word of Mr. Millington, as justifying the exclusion of loyal Japanese from California. . . .

The barometer of tolerance toward the evacuees is still too low on this Coast, and the opposition is still vehement and unscrupulous. We need to expedite the program of the United States Government, and to create an acceptance by the California public of the enlightened American way of dealing with law-abiding persons even though they are members of an unpopular minority.

In your lifetime and mine, Western civilization has twice drifted into a major catastrophe, due to lack of wisdom and understanding on the part of men. We shall do so again, and we shall lose the values for which we fight, unless we understand the implication of those values for the kind of complex world in which we live today. Basically, what men are seeking the world over is a decent security, an opportunity for a larger share of the good things of the earth, and above all a sense of meaning and dignity in their own lives. The only answer that can be given to these deep, perpetual hungers of men lies in the American concept of democracy, in the ideal of the common humanity of all men. Let us fight to preserve that concept no less vigorously than we fight to destroy the Germans and the Japs in Europe and the Pacific.



## **C u r r e n t   N a t i o n a l   A t t i t u d e s**

as recognized in the platforms of the Republican  
and Democratic National Conventions.

“We unreservedly condemn the injection into American life of appeals to racial and religious prejudice.”

—*Republican Equality Plank adopted in  
Chicago on July 19, 1944.*

---

“We believe that racial and religious minorities have the right to live, develop and vote equally with all citizens and share the rights that are guaranteed by the Constitution. Congress should exert its full constitutional powers to support those rights.”

—*Democratic Equality plank adopted in  
Chicago on July 26, 1944.*