

Ex-Official Calls Internment of Japanese 'Humane'

Special to The New York Times
WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 — John J. McCloy, former Assistant Secretary of War, today defended the internment of Japanese-Americans in World War II as "reasonably undertaken and thoughtfully and humanely conducted."

Mr. McCloy, one of the key Government officials who oversaw the relocation program, said he might again support the wartime resettlement of United States citizens because of their national heritage.

The 87-year-old retired diplomat testified before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which was chartered by Congress last year to determine whether the 120,000 Japanese-Americans who were uprooted from their homes on the West Coast and relocated in camps in the East and Middle West in 1942 were entitled to compensation.

To the sometimes vocal disagreement of Japanese-Americans seated in the Senate caucus room, Mr. McCloy said that no financial reparation was owed the civilians relocated under the program.

The war "caused disruption in all our lives," he said. "It isn't feasible for us now, 40 years after the act, to redistribute the damages."

Mr. McCloy, a Wall Street lawyer and one-time president of the World Bank, said that Japanese-Americans were placed in internment camps because Government officials feared they might engage in subversive activities.

In retrospect, he said, "The deconcentration of the Japanese population and its redistribution throughout the country resulted in their finding a healthier and more advantageous environment than they would have had on the West Coast following the Pearl Harbor attack and the reports of Japanese atrocities in the Philippines."

Mr. McCloy's testimony did not go smoothly. When he described conditions in the internment camps as "very pleasant," many in the audience responded with a long burst of sarcastic laughter. At other points, Mr. McCloy's comments were punctuated with hisses.

In the hearing, Mr. McCloy engaged

in a sharp exchange with William M. Marutani, a commission member who is a Court of Common Pleas judge in Pennsylvania. Mr. Marutani was lived in a relocation camp for six months in World War II.

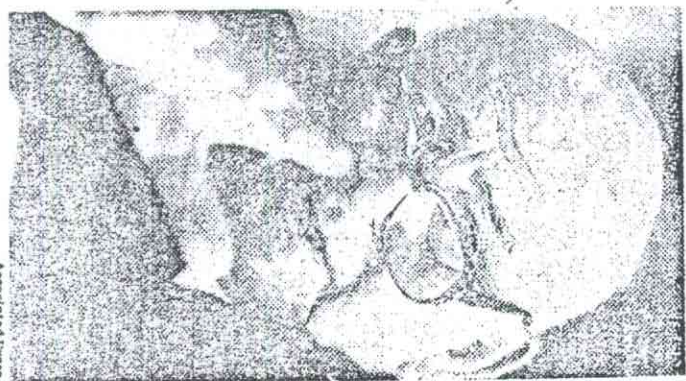
The judge challenged a statement by Mr. McCloy that Japanese-Americans were not "unduly subjected to the distress of the war."

Asked Mr. Marutani: "What other Americans, Mr. McCloy, fought for this country while their parents, brothers and sisters were incarcerated?" His voice had risen to a shout.

"I don't like the word 'incarcerated,'" Mr. McCloy replied. "Well, all right, behind barbed wire fences," Mr. Marutani snapped.

Mr. McCloy cautioned the commission, which is to report the findings of its inquiry to Congress next year, not to advocate policies that might someday prevent the forcible relocation of other American citizens because of ethnic background.

After World War II, he served as the United States High Commissioner in Germany, chairman of the Chase Manhattan Bank, board chairman of the Ford Foundation and chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations.



John J. McCloy yesterday at hearing on the internment of Japanese-Americans in World War II.