

## Guy Wright

# Finally, He Regrets

Earl Warren has finally come out against concentration camps in America. Hallelujah!

It took the former chief justice a long time to speak up, but better late than never.

And his statement even contained a hint of regret for the part he played in sending 110,000 Japanese-Americans to concentration camps during World War II.

At stake is Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950. Title II can accurately be called the American Concentration Camp Act.

It would provide a legal basis for doing to anyone what was done with dubious legality to Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor.

Any group of citizens could be rounded up and imprisoned merely because some official in Washington decided there was reason to believe they "probably will engage in or probably will conspire with others to engage in acts of espionage or sabotage."

No proof is needed, not even a showing of probable cause. Hysterical suspicion would be enough.

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ALMOST SINGLEHANDEDLY for 20 years the Japanese American Citizens League has fought for repeal of this vicious act. It has been a selfless fight, because there's little likelihood we would inflict the same injustice on Japanese Americans again.

Title II was passed during our anti-Communist hysteria of the McCarthy era. Now many Negro leaders fear it might be used against them.

But the Japanese Americans have fought the battle for the rest of us because they alone among American minorities know how it was.

During their long fight they have persuaded many public figures who took part in their detention to acknowledge that a wrong was done. But the man whose

words would have counted most, Chief Justice Earl Warren, remained stubbornly silent.

Warren wasn't always the great civil rights champion he became on the Supreme Court. Back in 1942 he was California's attorney general, running for governor, and he played an enthusiastic role in "resettling" the Japanese Americans — a euphemism for putting them in barbed wire pens in the desert.

An expression of regret while he was still chief justice would have contributed greatly toward repeal of Title II, but he spurned all pleas to admit his wartime mistake.

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NOW, HOWEVER, he has more or less done so. In a letter to Jerry Enomoto, president of the JACL, he says:

"Title II is not in the American tradition. It was passed in the most turbulent days of the Cold War. Although in all probability it would never be used except in times of public hysteria, still the danger of its use is always present. Only repeal of the act will remove that danger."

And he concludes: "I express these views as the experience of one who as a state officer became involved in the harsh removal of the Japanese from the Pacific Coast in World War II, almost 30 years ago."

That letter made quite an impression when read to the House Internal Security Committee, which is considering repeal of Title II. (The Senate already has voted for repeal.)

Other men as far apart as former Justice Arthur Goldberg and Gov. Ronald Reagan also have spoken out against Title II, Reagan wiring the committee:

"A lesson was learned in California during World War II which should be made a part of the record and the heritage of Americans everywhere who cherish liberty, freedom and constitutional guarantees."