

Statement Issued By Toronto Claimants Committee,
Per: Senji Takashima, Chairman,
67 Rose Avenue, Toronto.

Nov. 13, 1950.

DEBATE THE ISSUE OF EVACUATION LOSSES AND LET THE PUBLIC DECIDE

The statement issued by the executive secretary of the JCCA regarding the invitation from the Toronto Claimants Committee to debate the national executive committee's actions on evacuation losses fails to state that the committee is willing to explain their position at a public meeting, as would be expected from any person or group with public responsibilities, but chooses to evade the central issue by use of more than the usual quota of falsehoods.

Although misrepresentations are now expected as chronic, for only by use of such methods can the executive secretary and the national executive committee attempt to justify their actions, when the very liberal quota is exceeded and persistent attempts are made to mislead the public, then a stern reply is in order.

This reply is directed to two purposes: (a) to once again call upon the national executive committee to debate their position before the public for a full and accurate disclosure of all the circumstances and have the public decide upon the truth for themselves; and (b) to make it clear that no criticism has ever been directed by the Toronto Claimants Committee at the JCCA as a national organization, for the correct position of the organization is plainly stated in national conference reports as committed to a program of full compensation for evacuation losses. Our criticism is confined to the actions and statements of the executive secretary and the executive committee because they have without authority disregarded and violated the policy of the National JCCA as agreed to in conference, and have acted contrary to the expressed desires and ~~instructions~~ of claimants.

In the executive secretary's statement a deliberate attempt is made to propagate the false notion that the Toronto Claimants Committee is self-appointed and without status of any kind except for themselves. It is a very sad and pityful

state of affairs when a person is unable to recognise a plain and obvious fact regarding the bona fides of the Toronto Claimants Committee, and it is indeed the height of insolence to think that a statement so far from the truth would not cast serious reflection on the writer himself. It is known to all persons who have taken an interest in claims matters that the Toronto Claimants Committee was elected as a result of a ballot distributed to all claimants in the Toronto area, and that this method of election was agreed to as most appropriate at a meeting called by the JCCA.

All persons elected to the committee were therefore claimants, and almost without exception they were persons who had been prominent in industry and commerce, fisheries and agriculture, and the general community life of Japanese Canadian society for the past 20 and 30 years. The committee is composed of the following persons: Roger Obata, Shosaku Ozawa, Senji Takashima, Tomokichi Mio, Tsuguo Mineoka, Toshiaki Sumi, Kunio Hidaka, Nihei Otsuki, Kosaburo Takahashi and Zentaro Shin.

Any person who is familiar with Japanese Canadian affairs will readily see that organizational work for these persons is no new undertaking. Throughout the years they were among the leaders of their communities and business enterprises, and were persons tried and tested and found to measure up to the difficult tasks faced in the past by Japanese Canadians.

It should also be stated that the source of responsibility and authority of the Toronto Claimants Committee is different from appointed or self-appointed bodies like the JCCA national executive committee or the Co-operative Committee. Members of the Claimants Committee hold office not by personal choice nor because some friend arbitrarily placed him on the committee, but only by virtue of the election by claimants. The Claimants Committee has at all times, therefore, been responsible to the general body of claimants in Toronto and have referred problems back to them at general meetings, called on proper notice, for further instruction, sanction or modification of proposed policy.

~~Because~~ the committee functions along thoroughly democratic lines, it has welcomed persons to general meetings who were known to advocate views different from those of the committee. It should be added that on every occasion, after full discussion, the position taken by the committee on various issues has been upheld. Furthermore, no complaint has been received by the committee from any claimant in the Toronto area that its views were not representative, but added encouragement has been received in message of support from claimants in all parts of Canada.

The invitation to debate the actions of the JCCA national executive committee was in keeping with this previous practice of having a full disclosure of all relevant facts pertaining to matters at issue, and it was thought that this could be most satisfactorily accomplished by having speakers from the JCCA committee itself appear, rather than rely on second hand information from another party. Had this been done, all Toronto claimants and the Japanese Canadian public would have had an opportunity to make their own decision on the issue for themselves.

As in the past, had the debate taken place, it is likely that claimants would again have endorsed the position taken by their committee. This would have put the lie to the contention of certain JCCA committee members that their views are those of claimants - and in order to avoid this embarrassment which would make it necessary for them to repudiate their own past actions, they chose to avoid meeting their obligations and failed to appear.

Had the executive committee been loyal to National JCCA policy their actions would be defensible, and they could meet any challenge from any quarter at any time. Instead, as seen by the executive secretary's statement, they have chosen a ~~reprehensible~~ ^{shameful} road and are hiding behind a smoke screen from whence they prate in self-righteous and pompous tones about "unethical actions", violation of "simple rules of courtesy" - when the arrogant actions of certain of their members belie the contempt which they hold for claimants and reflect only on themselves. Concretely

and specifically, the ~~and~~ vulgar behavior overtly displayed toward claimants in repeated instances, if disclosed, would be shocking to all "right-minded" persons.

~~There is an English saying that patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel. In this case we believe there is a parallel - with "courtesy" substituted for "patriotism".~~