

Chapter II.
POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

In the largest and last pre-war Year Book and Directory of the Southern California Japanese population, published by the Rafu Shimpō, the first four names heading the list of "Organizations" appear in the following order:

"Central Japanese Association
258 East 1st st MU 1889

"Japanese Chamber of Commerce
117 N. San Pedro st MI 4181

"S.C. Japanese C. of C. & Ind.
100 S. Los Angeles st MI 4679

"Japanese American Citizens League
124 S. San Pedro st MU 8634"

The Year Book was the 1940-41 edition, and this order of listing in a sense reflected the generally acknowledged prominence of these four leading political organizations in community prestige and influence.

They were economic and social organizations in some of their functional aspects too; but primarily they were political.¹

In membership participation and financial support, as well as leadership, the first three organizations, the Central Japanese Association of America (Beikoku Chuo Nihonjin Kai), the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles (Rafu Nihonjin Kai), and Southern

¹ Because they were the chief organized mediums of the community's contact with government.

California Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Nanka Shoko Kai Gisho) were almost exclusively Issei. ^{Historically} ~~Politically~~, they ^{had grown from the} ~~stemmed from~~ Japanese government's concern over the welfare of Japanese nationals resident in the United States. Consequently, all three organizations, by the nature of their origin, had become habituated to looking to the accredited representative of the Japanese government--the Consular official--for guidance and leadership.

The Japanese American Citizens League's Los Angeles chapter, and its affiliated Southern District chapters, on the other hand, were entirely Nisei in leadership and membership, though not yet altogether in their financial support.

This three-to-one preponderance of Issei influence among the four outstanding organizations was symbolic of the balance of control between the two generations in the economic and social life of the community. In the political sphere, however, there is room for questioning whether this ratio carried over in the same proportion.

The common ground upon which all four groups met and operated was certainly more economic in nature than political. As between the three Issei organizations, there prevailed some stiff rivalry, overlapping of activities, and the seemingly inevitable outcropping of animosities between key individuals in each of the groups. Theoretically, the Los Angeles Japanese Chamber

of Commerce was a participating group within the Central Japanese Association of America. In some of their activities, however, they seemed competitive. The cleavage between the Central Association and the Southern California Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry was more marked. The former was a dissenting offshoot of the latter. While the Central Association retained the support and loyalty of the various Japanese Associations in the outlying areas, the Chamber was set up to include in its membership principally those Japanese business firms engaged in the import-export trade. The Nanka Shoko Kai Gisho never affiliated itself with the Chuo Nihonjin Kai.

The Japanese, "Rafu Nihonjin Kai", translated literally, is "Los Angeles Japanese Association." Because it came into frequent contact with non-Japanese groups, the Rafu Nihonjin Kai came to be known in English, as the "Los Angeles Japanese Chamber of Commerce." It was one of the 21 such local associations which comprised the Central Japanese Association:

Gardena Valley Japanese Association
 Garden Grove Japanese Association
 Guadalupe Japanese Association
 Imperial Valley Japanese Association
 Lompoc Japanese Association
 Long Beach Japanese Association
 Montebello Japanese Association
 Orange County Japanese Association
 Oxnard Japanese Association
 Pasadena Japanese Association
 Riverside Japanese Association
 Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Los
 Angeles
 San Bernardino County Japanese Ass'n

Smeltzer Japanese Association
Venice Palms Japanese Association
San Gabriel Valley Growers Association
Thermal Sangyo Doshi Kai

The combined resources of these groups, drawing financial support from successful agricultural operations as well as leading Japanese resident business enterprises, made the Central Japanese Association of America the most influential and important as well as largest of all pre-war organizations in Southern California. The bulk of its real membership strength came from non-urban areas where the agricultural, floricultural and fishing interests were dominant. Its chief urban participation came through the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles.

The trade and business organizations which spoke and acted for the economic interests of geographic areas in Central and Southern California maintained working relationships with the Central Japanese Association through delegated representatives.

A study of the names of the Executive Board of the Central Japanese Association on December 6, 1941, offers some idea of this representation. Sixteen of the eighteen Board members were Issei; the two Nisei were the Executive Secretary (man) and an office secretary (woman), both paid employees and technically without voting power, though most actions taken by the board dispensed with the formality of voting. The President was a Los Angeles city resident, an Issei graduate of

the University of Southern California law school who maintained what was referred to as a "law office" in Little Tokio but who could not hang up his shingle as an "Attorney-at-law" because aliens ineligible to citizenship were likewise ineligible for practise before the bar. Of the four vice-presidents, one was the owner of a profitable chop suey business in downtown Los Angeles, another was a successful Orange County farmer, a third was a Terminal Island hardware proprietor and active in the fishing industry there, the fourth was a well-to-do produce shipper from Santa Maria Valley. One of the two treasurers was proprietor of a Los Angeles auto sales and service firm, the other was a well known Montebello flower grower.

The five-man Advisory Board was composed of a Guadalupe farmer who was reputed to be the largest scale Japanese agriculturist in America (5000 acres in lettuce alone), two more "law office" men, each of whom had held down the presidency of the Central Association, and two others ^{who} were publishers of daily Japanese-English daily newspapers. The four auditors likewise represented interests that further cut across both geographic and economic interests of the population.

Like its 21 local units, the Central Japanese Association engaged in activities which seemed to be primarily economic in motivation.

The early history of the "Nihonjin Kai" is replete with instances of close control and assent

to the bidding of the Consular office. In the twenties, for instance, during the anti-Japanese political campaigning which preceded national as well as state legislation, the Japanese associations served to keep the community in contact with the Japanese government representative. For the problem in that period was one involving, for the most part, alien nationals. The Nisei were an insignificant, negligible factor. By 1940, however, the picture had changed considerably.

How the Central Japanese Association, and the Issei groups in general, came into conflict with and worked out a pattern of relationships with the Nisei organizations, particularly the politically emerging Japanese American Citizens League in the year preceding outbreak of war may be better understood when discussed in terms of the economic life of the population.

By 1940, the leadership of the Issei groups had developed a new concept of Issei status in America. Whereas, in the twenties and even mid-thirties the prevailing viewpoint had been for Issei to look upon themselves as sojourners in a land which denied by law the opportunity for them to become citizens, by 1940 the president of the Central Japanese Association was issuing statements to fellow Issei through the press assuring them that the Department of Justice of the United States would respect their rights

as "permanent residents legally admitted". This was interpreted by Issei newspaper editors as meaning that resident alien Japanese were better off than visiting Japanese merchants such as Mitsui representatives with respect to protection from the American government. It was intended for the most part to reassure parents of grown Nisei offspring that, as fathers and mothers of American citizens, they could look upon themselves as citizens de facto if not de jure.

While one segment of Central Japanese Association leadership, even in 1940, chose to spurn this concept of "permanent residence" in a country where they contended "even our children will never be anything better than second-rate citizens" and preferred to assert their reliance upon the protection of the Japanese government, there was current in the years before outbreak of war a movement among some Issei in Los Angeles to enlist support for making alien Japanese parents of American citizens eligible for naturalization.

A primary factor in the rise of this concept in Issei organization thinking appears to have been the substantial gains in the economic life of Southern California made by Issei leaders. As tensions between Japan and America mounted, the successful Issei business man or farmer faced the \pm prospects of converting his interests into transferrable form, taking his family and sailing for Japan; the alternative was to stay on, and in

most cases where Nisei members of the family had reached a stage where they could effectively make their wishes known, they exercised an influence to remain in the United States. Most Issei, however, were in the position of the man who had hardly the means, much less the desire, to return to Japan where possible means of making a livelihood were unknown factors. Organized political activity stemmed downward from the top where reposed the largest accumulations of financial wealth among Southern California Japanese.

In dollars and cents, in numbers of families dependent for livelihood, the production and distribution and sale of foodstuffs was a primary occupation among the group. The Central Japanese Association of America drew its support from an area embracing approximately 65,000 Issei, Nisei. With the partial exceptions of Long Beach, Los Angeles, Pasadena, the Association's constituency came largely from the truck farm belt running from Santa Maria Valley in the north to Imperial Valley in the south, touching the coastal fisheries from Monterey down through Terminal Island to San Diego.

The wholesale produce terminals of Los Angeles, ranked in 1940 as second largest in the nation after New York, offer a good index to show the top position^{of importance} of agriculture and its related industries to the people who belonged to and supported the Central Japanese Association's affiliated organizations. It was similarly important to some 249 different organizations within

that area of Central and Southern California where these operations centered.

The economic groupings in which Japanese farmers, fishermen, floriculturists, produce distributors and other business men were organized were primarily Iss-ei, both in leadership and membership. They constituted the most important source from which the Central Japanese Association, in seeking to speak for the community, drew its support.

The Issei community organization leadership came almost entirely from this class, an employer group. Nisei political leadership similarly reposed in the hands of an employer-professional group.

Between the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles, with its urban merchant constituency, and the larger Central Japanese Association reaching into the most prosperous Issei agricultural interests in Southern California, one finds a membership listing that cuts across the economic structure of the entire Japanese population.

In the raising of ~~the~~ funds, competition developed by 1940 between all four major political organizations. Both the Chamber of Commerce and Central Japanese Association worked fairly closely together, without overlapping campaigns. The Southern California Chamber of Commerce and Industry, seeking to garner financial support as well as moral backing from as solid a group of Little Tokio business interests as possible, found

resistance crystallized around support for the rival Japanese Chamber of Commerce and eventually it limited itself to those firms engaged in trans-Pacific import-export business.

Prior to 1941, the Japanese American Citizens League seems to have been regarded as no threat in tapping financial resources for organization activity. The older, well-established Issei groups were solicitous, paternal, cordial. When the J.A.C.L. began sending its representatives to directly ask for budget contributions from the same sources as the other organizations, and began asking for substantial sums, noticeable coolness set in.

There is evidence to support the belief that through most of the early thirties, the Issei organizations regarded the J.A.C.L. as a useful arm of their own respective bodies. There was close working cooperation between the Nisei leaders and the Issei. Illustrative is the following news item in the "Pacific Citizen" for January, 1938:

"LOS ANGELES--Including a resolution to help promote the Japanese American Citizens League National Convention to be held here this summer, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce announced a ten-point program for the current year.

"Several second generation were named for official positions at the meeting. Kiyoshi Okura was named to be in charge of the publicity department, while Eiji

Tanabe will be the head of social affairs.

"George Morey will head the research group, and Kay Sugahara has been picked to head the foreign trade division. Ken Matsumoto was placed at the head of the promotion group; Yoneo Arima, business and industries; and Shigemitsu Ando, agriculture.

"In addition to the resolution to aid the JAACL convention, the ten point program includes a plan to take active part in the drive for building a Japanese Community Center.

"The Chamber of Commerce cabinet is headed by Shunichi Murata as the president.

"Consul Ichiro Ota was requested to serve as advisor to the organization."1

Historically, the political organizations of the Japanese community grew around the Japanese Consular office. It enhanced the prestige of both individuals and groups to be close to that office. As late as 1939 and 1940, all three major Issei organizations, and even the Japanese American Citizens League on occasion, made it a practice to curry favor and maintain friendly relations with the Consulate. Whenever the Consul changed, one or all three Issei groups could be counted upon to throw a banquet for both the departing and arriving officials. In disputes of a local nature, when the good offices of either the Chuo Nihonjin Kai or Rafu Nihonjin Kai were found to be lacking in weight, the pres-

tige of the Consulate could be counted upon as an effective lever for settlement.

Two international events on the Pacific in the late thirties stand out as milestones in the relations between the major political organizations of Little Tokio and the Japanese Consulate: (1) the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese "Incident" on July 7, 1937, and (2) announcement of the abrogation of the 1911 Treaty of Trade and Commerce between the United States and Japan, a declaration which came in summer of 1939.

The first event definitely solidified relationships of not only the Chuo Nihonjin Kai, Rafu Nihonjin Kai, and Shoko & Kai Gisho, with the Consulate, but brought into the picture the then emerging J.A.C.L. The Nisei too, it was editorialized in the daily language press and stressed by the Issei in the home, had a mission in the conflict. While the Issei organizations mobilized their energies for action intended to demonstrate their support of Japan, Nisei leadership injected a pattern of thinking which compelled the younger generation to go down the line for the same cause. In January of 1938, six months after American newspaper headlines on the Far Eastern conflict had developed a latent U.S. public sympathy for China, a past president of one of the southern California J.A.C.L. chapters was quoted in the Pacific Citizen as saying:

"To date we have been either floundering or else foding ourselves in the belief that we were secure under our birth right as American citizens. In the past few months, we have had ample occasion to realize our mistake. To the majority of American people, we are Japanese. And as such, their opinion of Japan and the Japanese, though it may be formed through malicious propaganda and ignorance of the eastern situation, is also directed against the second generation. This injustice, because it has touched every Nisei, has helped to make us more conscious of our position in relation to the environment in which we live; and it is helping to make each of us realize that to insure ourselves against similar situations in the future, we must combine ourselves in our efforts to make the people whose nation, customs and civilization we have adopted become conscious of our true position." 1

This statement itself most nearly reflects the public position of the national Japanese American Citizens League; but at the chapter level, where Nisei leadership came under the influence, and frequently domination, of local Issei leadership, the identification of both generations with the cause of Japan was more marked.

Solicitation of funds, gathering of comfort bags to be sent to Japanese soldiers, sponsorship of lectures and programs to disseminate information about the war in China and other related activities, encouraged in degree by the Consular office, became the functions of the Issei political groups reaching down through the various social, economic, and religious organizations of the community. In one of the largest Issei-owned business firms in Los Angeles, the Three Star Produce Company, the

¹The Pacific Citizen Vol X No.16 January 1958
p. 2 c.)

suggestion that over 350 employees of the company be organized in a savings club and Japanese war bonds purchasing group reportedly was made by the Central Japanese Association; funds of the Mitsuhoshi Savings Club (Three Star Savings Club) were deposited with one of the Japanese branch banks in Los Angeles.

The abrogation of the American-Japanese Trade Treaty, announced six months in advance of its effective date in January of 1940, affected Little Tokio political leadership more at the Nisei level than at the Issei. It was easier for the American citizens of Japanese ancestry to accept the possibility, however remote, that the Sino-Japanese conflict might some day become the American-Japanese conflict, than it was for the Japanese resident Issei, an alien ineligible to American citizenship. A small segment of Nisei leadership in the J.A.C.L.,^m by 1940 was beginning to accept this possibility in its thinking. An inevitable conclusion drawn from this kind of thinking was that it could conceivably be unwholesome and unhealthy to maintain close relationships with the Japanese Consulate. This was a far cry from the days when the J.A.C.L. furnished the legwork for a Consulate-sponsored census of Japanese residents, both Issei, and Nisei, in Los Angeles.

Despite this late development in Nisei attitudes, its effect upon Issei organized activities was notable at the top. The 1940-41 Americanism campaign of the Central

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Japanese Association, viewed with considerable suspicion by some observers, was in part the inspiration of what may be described as J.A.C.L. influence in Issei councils. The 23 months between January, 1940 and the attack on Pearl Harbor were characterized by ever-mounting tension between the United States and Japan. The Los Angeles J.A.C.L., with headquarters within two blocks walking distance of all three Issei political groups, had definitely swerved away, as an organization from its previous close association with the Japanese Consulate. Some of its top officers and individual leaders, however, were still conspicuous in associating with the Issei organizations which, in turn, had not severed Consular contacts. These lines apparently remained unsevered and intact up to December 7, 1941.

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appear to have dawned with powerful impact upon the Issei organizations, as it did among leading Issei business men in Los Angeles from 1940 on. ~~The Issei leadership~~ The Central Japanese Association, for instance, it was ~~discussed~~ discussed at some meetings, should rely more and more upon the younger Nisei American Citizen organizations to engage in the protective work against discrimination and economic set-back. But the younger organizations which could be ~~persuaded and~~ ^{and controlled} influenced with ease ~~had~~ lacked the prestige, the political contacts, the community leadership of the J.A.C.L., the Issei leadership concluded. The result was, ~~that~~ Nisei leadership would be bought and brought into the Issei organization; thus in ~~1940~~ ^{early 1941} 1941, the Nisei who had in 1939 been president of the Los Angeles chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League was offered the position of executive secretary of the Central Japanese Association at a salary reported to be \$150 monthly.

Whatever may have been the opinion of the succeeding J.A.C.L. ~~officers~~ officers about this move, and to most of them it was nothing startling, the attitude of the ex-J.A.C.L. president reflected no sense of guilt for having "sold out" his group, as might be inferred by the ~~incipient~~ incipient rivalry then ~~blooming~~ blooming between Issei and Nisei organizations. Eiji Tanabe regarded the Central Japanese Association offer as an opportunity to indoctrinate the Issei group with the "Americanization" principles he had espoused as head of the J.A.C.L., he told intimates; and furthermore, management of his downtown hotels, which provided him and his family with chief source of income, was not a full time job. The ex-English editor, ex-J.A.C.L. president, was eager for conspicuous community service, so he accepted the offer, replacing the veteran Issei executive secretary, Shiro Fujioka, who went into retirement.

At this time the Southern California Chamber of Commerce and Industry already had a Nisei secretary, Takeo Tada, fluent in both English and Japanese as was Tanabe. Tada was an assistant to Kaoru Akashi, the Issei "shoki-cho" (Executive Secretary) for the group.

The executive secretary of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles in the year before outbreak of war was Shuichi Sasaki, Issei who spoke and wrote English almost as well as he did Japanese.

The two years preceding Pearl Harbor
~~This~~ was a period during which Nisei assumption of larger roles in organization activity was ~~notable~~ notably conspicuous. ~~The~~ The wholesale ~~produce~~ market area witnessed the formation of the Junior Produce Club, ^{largely} fostered by the Issei Japanese Commission Merchants Association; in the grocery field, encouraged by the Nanka Merchants Association, ^a ~~the~~ second generation ~~Nisei Grocery Association and some other~~ grocers group came into existence; the Japanese American Horticultural Society was the ^{new} ~~former~~ counterpart ^{to the Issei group} in the Nursery field ~~to the Issei group~~ ^(Nisei) that the much older Junior Floricultural Society had been to the Issei in the flower ^{industry} ~~market~~. On the farm front, the Nisei Farmers Inc., had ^{already} organized; in July, 1940, ~~Little Tokio~~ a group of 25 leading Nisei business and professional ~~men~~ in ~~the~~ the East First and San Pedro street district formed a committee they named "Little Tokio, Inc." on a junior chamber ~~and~~ of commerce plan to draw up a long range program of business development for the area; *they gathered together exclusive of, and independent from, the Rapa Nihonjin Kai, Chuo Nihonjin-Kai, or ~~the~~ Nanka Shoko Kai' gaku.*

~~These~~ ~~the~~ ~~activities~~
The surgence of Nisei organized leadership into economic spheres of activity was hastened and stimulated, it appears, by the increasing tension between America and Japan and the resultant

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A noticeable emphasis effect upon Issei thinking. ~~The--constant-harping~~ upon "Americanism" and "loyalty" and "we are citizens" theme characteristic of J.A.C.L. activity appears over and over again in the statements issued at this time/~~for-public-consumption-~~ by all the Nisei groups. For instance, the Junior Produce Club came into being at the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Street wholesale markets in September of 1940, with beginning with a preamble: a Constitution setting forth its avowed purposes in Article III as follows:

"The purposes of this organization shall be:

"1. To promote and maintain American-Japanese friendship.

"2. To create better understanding among all people connected, directly and indirectly, with the agricultural and produce industries.

"3. To foster amicable relationships between the three principal market terminals in the City of Los Angeles.

"4. To encourage and further the study of economic principles relative to the produce industry.

"5. To acquaint and better develop cultural activities among our members.

"6. To sponsor and to encourage sports activities.

"7. To uphold the principles of good citizenship and true Americanism by participating in various civic activities.

"8. To promote the general welfare of the American citizens of Japanese ancestry.

"9. To cooperate with various organizations in the furtherance of good understanding among all people."

*Check - notes on
Tanaka journal -
Oct, 1941 - April 28, 1942*

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effect upon Issei thinking.

~~As a result of economic warfare~~
Following abrogation of the Treaty of Trade and Commerce between Japan and the United States in January, 1940 (?), the Issei mind collectively seems to have turned a major share of its pre-occupation upon the unfavorable position of the "Zaibei-Dobo" group--the Issei who were ineligible to American citizenship.

alone
~~As a result of economic warfare~~
It would have been difficult to find any Issei who as incident after incident mounted, believed war would eventually come, though nearly all gave evidence of concern, anxiety and fear that something adverse was encouraged recognized in the offing. Most Issei were ~~led~~ by their community leaders at this stage, however, to believe that their status as permanent residents of America was much more favorable than that of being potentially out-and-out "teki-kokujin" ~~Issei~~ (potential enemy aliens in the event of a war).

Thus, in March, 1941, Gongoro Nakamura, president of the Central Japanese Association, issued a release in both Japanese and English for publication in the three daily vernacular newspapers to "allay growing fears of the Issei as to what would happen to them if war comes in the Pacific". Nakamura said:

"It has always been my opinion that we Japanese residents in America, who were legally admitted into the United States as permanent residents, and who are fathers and mothers of American citizens of Japanese ancestry, and who admire and respect American institutions, ideals and traditions, and who have been endeavoring to promote the general welfare of the community in contributing to the American way of life through our respective occupations and professions, will be treated as residents and not as alien enemies; if we always behave ourselves as good residents and continue to do our part as the members of the community, even though the severance of diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States might unfortunately occur in the future, which, of course, we fervently pray will never happen; because America stands for Great Principles--Freedom, Equality, Justice, and Tolerance and

because we sincerely believe ~~it~~ that America now and always will live up to those Principles which are the priceless heritage of this Great Republic."

Nakamura ~~was~~^{was} s statement went on to announce that he had just ~~been~~ received correspondence from "Hon. Lemuel B. Schofield, special assistant to the Attorney-General" stating that "Section I of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States provides in part as follows: 'nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law.'" His ~~concluding~~ reassuring conclusion to Southern California Issei was: "From the foregoing, you will readily see that we are amply protected by the Constitution of the United States."

~~These~~
Statements such as these lulled many Issei business leaders into a greater sense of security, took the sharpness off some of the disturbing headlines that jarred their optimism at nearly every turn. ^{Nevertheless,} articulate Issei leadership, especially that centered among the three major Los Angeles organizations, became acutely self-conscious of the national publicity then being poured upon the "Japs on the West Coast." The August 10, 1940, edition of Liberty Magazine ~~which~~ which published an article "Fifth Column in California" led a number of the Issei to observe that "hysteria has already set in".

Early on the morning of September 3, 1940, off ~~the~~ Horseshoe Kelp some 3½ miles from San Pedro, California, the Japanese N.Y.K. Line freighter "Sakito Maru" loomed out of the fog and rammed into the anchored sport fishing barge "Olympic II". The 50-year-old converted schooner keeled over, quickly went to the bottom, eight lives lost. Three days later, in Los

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Federal Court, there was a hearing on claims totalling \$787,500 brought by families of victims and barge owners. Attorney William Roethke, representing the Japanese (Nippon Yusen Kaisya) steamship firm, asked the court to make the bonds as "low as possible," explaining:

"Bonding companies are demanding cash collateral from the owners of the Sakito on the possibility that something might go amiss between the United States and Japan."

sponsored by the four major political organizations *at this time*
~~in the darkening shadow of impending disaster~~
Thus it was that at most public gatherings where

Caucasian guests were ~~watg-~~ present or within hearing distance, a major pre-occupation of both Issei and Nisei dinner speakers was that of "loyalty to America". The English sections of the vernacular press hardly let a day go by without ~~either editorial or press~~ reminder of the theme:

~~"We (Nisei) take rightful pride"~~

"America is a permanent home to use—a permanent home where we have lived, worked and where we expect to die and be buried in the soil of our native land. We know no other home. We would take up arms to defend it against every enemy. . . Prejudice and discrimination, due to our having been born Americans of Japanese parentage instead of perhaps, Irish, or what you will, have given us a desire to make ourselves still better Americans because circumstances make it so. We work for our living, pay our taxes regularly, and we keep off criminal and relief rolls. We generally mind our own business and share a deep ~~and~~ aversion to foreign philosophies in which we detect threats to American ideals as embodied in our Constitution."

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Loyalty League, was founded in San Francisco in 1918, by six young Nisei, three of whom had records of service in the U.S. Army. It was little more than an informal discussion group, devoted to debate and deliberation on the merits of political candidates and issues as a basis for "good citizenship." The second was the Seattle Progressive Citizens

League, founded in 1922, with somewhat the same objectives but characterized by closer cooperation with the Issei leaders of the community. The idea of "Loyalty Leagues" spread both ^{rapidly} north and south, chiefly through the medium of the Japanese language dailies. A growing realization that sustained existence depended upon Issei support, led to contacts with the various Japanese Associations in California, and a plan was engineered for the formation of a California-wide American Loyalty League. Delegates for a meeting in 1923 were selected by the Japanese Associations in nine localities, the choice being usually the oldest Nisei in the community. The average age of the delegates was 21; the oldest was 27. A formal organization in structure came out of this session. It was named, "American Loyalty League," membership was restricted to citizens, and a constitution was officially adopted. The program as described retrospectively by the founder was as follows:

" Our chief purpose was to create a better understanding between Caucasians and peoples of Japanese descent. We represented the interests of all our people; we had become a civic organization and had expanded out a little bit with heavier responsibilities; we stressed the obligations of citizenship, urged our members to exercise their privilege of voting. But ^{above} of all, we were educational and public relations groups in our own communities. Of course, the bunch was so young we couldn't do much more than discussing political candidates; we didn't have funds. Naturally there were

these discriminatory laws and practises that were coming along. We wanted to do something for our people but none of us had any experience.

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The educational background of the founders and chief organizers was almost completely American public school; ^{and} all the key figures were either college graduates or had some university training. There were no Kibei among them. None was financially independent; all were dependent for livelihood upon a community dominated and controlled by Issei. All were at the bottom of the hill just starting to climb to what each hoped would be business or professional success. Each felt with differing degrees of sensitivity the limitations imposed by discriminatory practise in America. And there is evidence to show that most Nisei of that day, contemplating ^{their} his future, regarded Japan and the Far East as offering potentialities for individual ability far in excess of opportunities in America.

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After about two and a half years the movement lost ground, and active Issei backing was withdrawn. It had had no real plan of action, and the programs it presented to the Nisei were in vague and general terms that had no popular appeal.

The decline of the organization in California seems to have been the signal for injection of new life from Seattle. In 1928, the founder of the Progressive Citizens League "arrived in California and began his missionary work . . . to rehabilitate the citizens' league movement. . . . The idea took hold immediately . . . The framework of the

National organization was discussed and planned at a
San Francisco meeting [in April 1929]." ³⁹

Within the span of seven years from 1930 through 1936, during which four "national" conventions were held, the Japanese American Citizens League emerged as a movement of the more Americanized Nisei to collectively secure their political and economic self-protection.

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~~This~~ ^{The} effort to find means of immunity from prejudiced and discriminatory practices stands out as an objective in which all League chapters were in common agreement. In this sense, the J.A.C.L. as a movement of the ^{later} latter twenties and early thirties, was the logical development of the self-protective activities of the older Japanese Associations. The fundamental difference between the character of the Nihonjin Kai (Japanese Association) and the Shimin Kyo Kai (Citizens League) approach to the common problem of economic and political pressures against the Japanese community revolved around the place of the Japanese Consulate as an instrument of action. For the Japanese Association the government of Japan's agent in America had always been the power upon which greatest reliance was placed; this was the ² natural consequence of the Issei's alien-ineligible-to-citizenship status.

For the J.A.C.L., however, the Consular officer appeared

³⁹ From the General Program, National J.A.C.L. Convention, San Francisco, California, 1934, p. 16.

in a somewhat different role. He was the representative of a foreign government, a friendly foreign government, and with whom close affinity was felt and recognized. But ultimately, it was apparently felt by J.A.C.L. leaders even in this period, that the greatest dependence for security and equality of treatment in American life lay in J.A.C.L.'s direct approach to the representatives of the American government and the American people.

This difference remained submerged to a great extent in the early thirties. Aside from an intense play upon the slogans of patriotic Americanism employed by the Japanese American Citizens League, there was no marked difference in the acceptance of the Japanese Consul's position of pre-eminence as recognized guardian of the community's welfare between Japanese Association and J.A.C.L. The Nisei population for the most part was still in its minority. As a political factor, the second generation was negligible. As an economic factor, it was almost entirely still dependent upon the alien first generation. The financial support for this citizens organization, as in the earlier period, came largely from sources within the Japanese community.

In two instances of interracial friction, in 1934 and 1935, (Salt River Valley, Arizona, and Tulare County, California) the Japanese Association and the J.A.C.L. joined forces with the Japanese Consular Office to protect the interests of Issei and Nisei growers and laborers.

In this connection, it is a matter of recorded performance that the Japanese American Citizens League's

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efforts to help solve tension and conflict problems where violence against Issei and Nisei had occurred was always characterized by a conciliatory, defensive approach. There was seldom a vigorous, denunciatory lashing out against the Caucasian attackers in the J.A.C.L. leadership's conduct. The spirit of arbitration, of conciliation, of non-violence seemed to prevail.

During this period, the J.A.C.L. was brought to a position of recognition within the Japanese communities of the entire Pacific Coast by successful participation, as a league of citizens, in bringing about changes in laws and regulations having adverse effects or implications for Japanese Americans, for example, (1) Amendment of the Cable Act in 1931, enabling Nisei women marrying Issei men to both regain and retain their American citizenship; (2) Passage of the Oriental Veterans Citizenship Act in June, 1935; (3) Obtaining "recognition of passport" in 1936, thus making it possible for Nisei to obtain easy admittance into the United States after going to Japan or traveling abroad.

In each of these cases, representatives of J.A.C.L. made direct approaches to American government representatives in Washington. The organization also participated actively in fighting regional discriminatory legislation, e.g., anti-alien fishing laws and restrictive land laws. J.A.C.L. spearheaded a concerted attempt to end segregation which had been introduced in schools in four small California

communities. It challenged the regulation of a county clerk who had ruled that all Japanese American voters would be required to show their expatriation from dual citizenship papers before being allowed to register and vote. Campaigns for equal treatment of Japanese Americans appeared throughout this period in many different localities.

During the late 1930's, J.A.C.L. leadership tended to make Americanism education an end in itself and not a means towards the attainment of the earlier objective of economic and political self-protection. Following the National Convention in Seattle in 1936, the editor of the Seattle Japanese American Courier who was also editor of the J.A.C.L.'s tabloid publication, Pacific Citizen, began an intensive newspaper campaign for Nisei patriotic activity. Through these papers, he channeled his views into the coast daily English sections of the vernacular press. His editorials were widely quoted, both by Nisei editors and J.A.C.L. orators. The emphasis upon complete identity, "single loyalty," "undivided allegiance," and "faithfulness" to the United States of America, "our glorious land of freedom and liberty" became a J.A.C.L. trademark.

The marked increase in the number of eligible Nisei voters, accompanying the approach to majority of the second generation Japanese Americans, contributed greatly to the J.A.C.L.'s sense of self-importance in 1937-38. These were years of branching J.A.C.L. interests and claims. In

overwrought

Seattle, for example, the organization even took a high degree of credit for maintaining the low juvenile delinquency rate among the Japanese population.

In Los Angeles, it launched into that city's political campaigning and elections and advertised itself in the vernacular press as the fountainhead of citizenship education; in Centerville it sponsored oratorical contests for Nisei and sponsored social events; in Terminal Island and San Gabriel it organized speakers' bureaus to conduct public relations among Caucasian organizations. The Sacramento chapter instituted lecture series on such topics as "Vocational Future for Nisei" and "Second Generation Marriage." The Sonoma County J.A.C.L. in California and the Thomas, Washington, chapters went in for oratorical contests and socials; the San Mateo chapter reported periodic successful picnics, while in Orange County, members debated the topic of "Unionization"; at Watsonville and Fresno, "talent revues," dramatic and musical presentations were highlights of a year's activities, and at Yakima, Washington, Nisei orators talked on such subjects as "Builders of Goodwill," "The Conflict of the Ages," "Makers of the Flag," "We Can't Fail," "Government of, by, and for The People," "A Citizen's National Ideals," and "Duties and Responsibilities of the Niseis as American Citizens."

The conspicuous stress upon Americanism education of the younger Nisei who identified themselves with the J.A.C.L.

movement may be interpreted in the light of the comparatively isolated character of the Japanese community on the west coast. There was an overweening consciousness of the "Japanizing" influences within the community. J.A.C.L. leaders of the period made frequent references to these influences; they were aware of the Japanese language schools, the problems of the Kibei, dual citizenship status, Issei economic control and Issei sympathies for Japan in the China situation. And one means of adjusting themselves to this situation, perhaps, was for them to find a counterbalancing over-emphasis upon the "Nisee's Place in America."

For a time, however, they exercised care not to disparage the cultural values of Japan, nor to antagonize Issei feelings in the latter's sympathies for Japan. Sensitive to the repeated attacks against the Japanese language schools from Caucasian sources, yet aware of the entrenched support of the schools as an institution of the Japanese community, the J.A.C.L. during the early part of this period passed frequent resolutions which at the same time affirmed the value of Japanese language education in "making better American citizens" and urged the schools to be "more vigorously American" in their curriculum.

The concept of loyalty was repeatedly talked about at organization meetings. There is a certain fervor and intensity on the subject of loyalty not found in other

J.A.C.L. discussions.

An effort to analyze the J.A.C.L. definition of American loyalty leads to an examination of the public speeches of the National presidents, the minutes on meetings where the subject of dual citizenship was discussed, and press statements during these years. For it was in this period of adjustment that the build-up of previous years on the theme "Nisei, Be Loyal to America" got widest attention within the Japanese community.

In no other J.A.C.L. leader is there the consistency of purpose nor persistence of effort in employing the term "loyalty" in the entire movement than in the case of the first National president. In his keynote speech, as retiring president in 1936, he said:

" . . . Loyalty means that we should be ready to sacrifice every interest that you have and our lives itself, if our country calls upon us, and that is the loyalty which should be inculcated; that we are not to be loyal so long as we are pleased or not; and that loyalty which is only pleasing is only self-indulgence and selfishness. . . ." ⁴¹

The generalizations defining "loyalty" according to the J.A.C.L. interpretation were repeated a hundredfold at

⁴¹ From J.A.C.L. records.

local meetings, district council gatherings, national conventions, in oratorical contests, in the Pacific Citizen, in the English sections of the daily language press.

The terminology of these expressions, moreover, bears strong resemblance to the Americanism education of the day sponsored by such organizations as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Daughters of the American Revolution. Drawing as they did upon such "Americanism" influences, it became evident in the latter part of this period that J.A.C.L. leadership developed a division and differences over the concept of loyalty to America, for while they could define the term in generalizations and get agreement, they could not reach unanimity among themselves in defining loyalty in relation to specific persons, situations, and circumstances.

The first break developed in 1937 over the issue of sympathies and leanings in the Sino-Japanese controversy. Up to this time, almost without exception, National J.A.C.L. leadership supported the Issei position of identity with Japan's cause. Wherever there had been any criticism of Japan, it had been not against her invasion of Chinese soil nor against her employment of

military force in attempting to solve her problems, but against her lack of good propogandists. Loyalty to America in this early stage, then, in no wise excluded identity or sympathy with Japan's cause in the Far East. In the later period of adjustment, however, the first break developed in the concept of American loyalty which included sympathy with Japan. In an apologetic, defensively bolstered presentation of its case, National J.A.C.L. leadership thinking veered away from the notion that the Nisei could be wholeheartedly loyal to America and still have sympathies with Japan in the China situation. It first took a stand of neutrality, apparently under pressure from Caucasian influences, and this was not altogether popular within the Japanese community. Here one detects the first significant break of the J.A.C.L. away from the Issei leadership of the Japanese community, and the central issue underlying the surface differences is a J.A.C.L. re-definition of its most frequently used expression "loyalty" in terms of a specific situation.

The break at first was small, almost unnoticeable.

There were attempts to make allowances for "sympathies for Japan's cause" with the admonition that such sympathies must not be allowed to become in any way related to their allegiance

not The position of the loyal American Nisei who maintained wholehearted allegiance to the United States and kept from getting "too involved" in the China-Japan situation was the proper and most desirable one, the J.A.C.L. implied at this time.

From this avowed position of neutrality on the Sino-Japanese conflict, because of fear that any other stand might be misconstrued by the Caucasian public as disloyalty to America, the J.A.C.L. concept of loyalty crystallized in still another form by 1940. The Sino-Japanese conflict had shifted steadily into the Pacific and now threatened to develop into an American-Japanese conflict. The pressures of American public opinion, almost wholly sympathetic with China in 1937, had now grown in intensity and were distinctly anti-Japanese. Out of the habit of defining loyalty, talking about loyalty, interpreting it for both the Japanese and Caucasian communities, a segment of J.A.C.L. leadership in 1939 and 1940 began to arrogate to itself the authority to judge and evaluate the loyalty of members of the Japanese community.

The defining of American loyalty in terms of specific persons in these latter years became a practice encouraged by Caucasian officials with whom J.A.C.L. leaders came into contact. More than any other single organization of the Japanese community, the J.A.C.L. came to be associated in the popular mind with the "inu" role that reached its climax

within the relocation centers.

An analysis of correspondence between National J.A.C.L. officers during this period is particularly revealing. In references to individuals and acts within the Japanese community over which these leaders were admittedly disturbed and concerned, one discovers differences among them on how far a man should go in setting himself up as the judge of the "loyalty" of his fellow Nisei and Issei. There ~~are~~^{are} considerable differences of opinion as to how loyal to America the Issei should be as American-Japanese tensions mounted. To some J.A.C.L. individual leaders, the concept of loyalty was confined to the requirements of being a law-abiding person, Issei or Nisei. There seems to be more general agreement on this kind of definition than on any other.

This point of view typifies the apparent thinking revealed in the correspondence of the then National president who had had a long history of contacts within the Japanese community of San Francisco that had seemingly equipped him with an understanding of Issei feelings, sympathies, leanings, and their dilemma in the growing conflict situation on the Pacific. There is, from this approach to the avowed J.A.C.L. responsibility of defining loyalty in the Japanese community, an emphasis upon identifying the League as the representative of that community, a position that made for a degree of tolerance in interpreting overt expressions of sympathy for Japan; furthermore, this viewpoint took considerable comfort

See Chapter V below, also The Spoilage, Chapter III.

in the fact that there was no war between America and Japan, and it depended mightily upon an avoidance of it.

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~~Somewhat~~ In contrast to the flexible and tolerantly-inclined position of the National president was the attitude apparently taken by the National vice-president in judging the American loyalty and disloyalty of members of the Japanese community, especially in Southern California.

All the National officers of the J.A.C.L. in 1940-41 had come into personal contact with federal investigative agencies, specifically the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Military Intelligence, and Naval Intelligence. Close personal relationships characterized most of these top contacts. Similarly, district and local chapter leaders of the J.A.C.L. found themselves increasingly approached by representatives of not only federal, but state and local law enforcement and security officers.

X
Few of these contacts stand out as examples of close-working relationship between a J.A.C.L. leader and a federal agency as does that which apparently existed between the National vice-president and the Naval Intelligence. His correspondence for this period indicates an assumption that war with Japan ^{was} ~~is~~ probable, perhaps inevitable. On this basis, there was a far greater willingness on his part than on the president's to point an accusing finger at individuals suspected of adhering to Japan as against the United States. Apparently under the tutelage of federal investigative officials, he played a prominent role in the conversion of J.A.C.L. local leadership to the acceptance of the "security"

role it played in 1940-41. This role is described differently, of course, depending upon point of view. From the standpoint which ultimately came to prevail within the Japanese community, it was the role of "spies and stooges for the F.B.I." From the standpoint of J.A.C.L. leadership, it was the role of "constructive cooperators for national defense." From the standpoint of men like the vice-president, it was a brave service and contribution to the war effort to report what they judged to be subversive and disloyal acts and utterances. To the majority of fear-ridden Issei and resentful Nisei, the activity assumed the aspects of a hateful witch hunt.

A recapitulation of the J.A.C.L. as a movement among Japanese Americans is recorded in the 1940 national convention and shows that the movement had grown steadily since 1930. In membership participation it was nearly ten times as great as when it was organized. In number of chapters it had quadrupled. But in round numbers of participating members, despite its preeminence as a Nisei organization, the J.A.C.L. was still without the active support of the majority of American citizens of Japanese ancestry on the Pacific Coast. It had always been an organized minority within the Japanese community seeking to make claims in the Caucasian community that it spoke in behalf of all Americans of Japanese ancestry. It had nearly always found dissenters within the Japanese community, and these had increased in proportion to J.A.C.L. growth by 1940.