

Documents from Governor Ralph Carr's Collection

1939-1943



Colorado Governor Ralph L. Carr, who served one term from 1939 until 1943, was one of the few U.S. governors who did not give in to the war hysteria. While he favored declaring war against the Japanese after Pearl Harbor, he did not believe that the Japanese-Americans should be stripped of their rights, especially if they were United States citizens. On the other hand, he had to uphold the federal laws, which dictated that Japanese-Americans from the West Coast were to be interned in camps where they lost many freedoms regardless of their citizenship status.

The attitudes of Carr and Americans about the Japanese can be seen through Governor Carr's correspondence files (please see below). The war obviously stirred up some very strong and emotional opinions as these letters to Governor Carr clearly indicate.

As Carr was leaving office, he warned the State Legislature about the threat of U.S. citizens losing their freedoms in the "Address of the Honorable Ralph L. Carr, Governor of Colorado Delivered before the Joint Session of the Colorado Legislature Thirty-fourth Session at Denver January 8, 1943:"

"The Allied armies are battling today, carrying all the force of civilization against a plan which would control the lives of all other people and determine their courses. A plan which would move into any state and say to its farmers, to its industrialists, to its housewives and to its business men that they must change their chosen ways of life...

Have we come to the point in this country where it is necessary, in order for us to live, that we must modify and control the attitudes and thoughts and actions of every human being in America according to a chart developed by some group which would make us conform to a national scheme?"

My - address

Native Sons of Colorado:

Your nation is at war!

The one thing we can and must do for our country in this war is to keep those 30,000 alien Japs which it is proposed to bring from California, out of our State. We now have 1,869 native born and 345 alien born Japs in Colorado.

Japan is one of the most mountainous countries in the world. All we have to do to make the Japs feel right at home is to bring them here and turn them loose in our foot-hills. All you have to do to make their victory complete in the Pacific is to fortify them back of the Rocky Mountains and they will soon control all the territory between Colorado and the Pacific coast. Pikes Peak would make a good lookout for them. At home they live on the highest portion of that huge chain of mountains which lies on the advanced frontier of the Asiatic Continent. It would be far better to establish this Jap menace out in the open desert where secret hiding places are not made to order as they are in our mountains, and where guerrilla warfare and sabotage could be prevented. Border patrols on the desert could easily handle these aliens and there would be no danger from their treacherous activities. Colorado will be needed as a fortification for our own people before this frightful nightmare is over.

Do you know that the Native Sons of California have been telling of this yellow peril for 25 years? They speak of the Japs' Peaceful Invasion? and say that the Yellow Japs aided by the White Japs have acquired title to and occupy much of the state's best agricultural land, as well as considerable other acreage in STRATEGIC LOCATIONS.

C. M. Hunt, Editor of Grizzly Bear Magazine says, "We are prepared to prove, without qualification from the mouths of Japanese themselves, that they constitute a menace to our institutions and government; that they are diametrically opposed to the principles established by the founders of this republic. To have the facts - authoritative and incontrovertable.

"Had the Japs been prohibited from colonizing in strategic locations, had Japan been denied the privilege of using California as a breeding ground for dual citizens (Nisei), the treacherous Japs would not have attacked Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941, and this country would not today be at war with Japan.

"California today is in grave danger from within; while California authorities have been sleeping the Japs have been faithfully carrying on for their beloved Emperor."

Herbert Hoover says, "There is just one job before the American people. We must defeat this invasion by Japan and we must fight it in any place that will defeat it."

For 45 years Japan has been preparing for this war. Military and naval service has been compulsory for all males between the ages of 17 and 45 years. Japan has been engaged in a series of conquests and uprisings since the year 1854, when Commodore Perry invaded the harbor of Uraga with a squadron of U. S. Naval war vessels and enforced a treaty which compelled Japan to establish

a trade association with other nations and thus ended her isolation policy of 216 years.

Our boys have signed up to do all in their power to fight for and to protect their country. Already there are enough Colorado boys in the service to man two battleships.

How well prepared are they to perform this task? Do we realize what we have sent our fine clean boys out to do? Do we know that they were mowed down like flies by Japanese machine guns in the raid on Pearl Harbor? Some of them were thrown over board into flaming oil, burning on the waters of that beautiful bay? More than 3,000 of them gave up their lives out ~~on that lonely island of Wake~~ where they were sent to live like sentinels on an outpost to protect the shores of the west coast of America.

Japan has been deeply antagonistic and resentful of all American authority in what she considers Asiatic Territory and has felt keenly her loss of Port Arthur, ever since her successful conquest of China in 1895, when Russia, Germany and France interfered and helped to withhold the Liatung Peninsula and Port Arthur (fortified by Russia) and forced her to accept a cash settlement for these conquered places. Our boys are up against that Jap. hatred.

If there ever was a need for this organization of Native Sons to function for the good of our Mother State, Colorado, it is NOW! What excuse have we to be an organization if we do not arouse ourselves and prevent these almond-eyed sons of the Orient from being dumped on our door step. The Japanese challenge has invaded your own home state territory. What will your answer be?

Mr. Robert Warren, Director of Colorado State Advertising Bureau, will discuss the subject, "WILL COLORADO PERMIT JAP. ALIENS TO BE SENT TO COLORADO" at the at the Daly Auditorium, 1600 Sherman St., entrance at rear of building from 16th Street side, Thursday, February 19, 8 P.M.

Mr. Warren has requested the cooperation of the Native Sons of Colorado in protecting our state against this Jap invasion. Be there!

1942 dues are due. Get your NSC badge and wear it.

On account of illness in the family of your President, Chas. T. Mahoney, no election of officers was held in January. Officers will be elected at this meeting.

Join your brothers in their all out effort to protect your state. Our boys won't want Japs in our mountains!

Charles T. Mahoney, President C. S. Russell, Vice-President

A. W. Hall, Sec-Treas. FE3017 W. L. Murphy, Mem.Chan. CH 5835

First Methodist Church

Rufus C. Baker, D.D., Minister

Leonard A. Smoot, Associate Minister

Spruce at Fourteenth Street

Boulder, Colorado

April 17, 1942

Governor Ralph S. Carr
Denver, Colorado

Dear Governor Carr,

The Ministers' Association of Boulder, Colorado, have asked me to write you, expressing our sincere appreciation of your high-minded and statesman-like attitude toward the whole enemy alien question, especially as it relates to our clear obligation as a state to cooperate with the Federal Government in accepting our full quota of Japanese and others being evacuated from the Pacific coast area as a necessary war measure.

The many Japanese now residing in our state, as well as those living in the Pacific coast area, have made for themselves a well-deserved reputation for industry and thrift; are law-abiding and have through the years conducted themselves well. Many of them are native born, many are Christians, and all of them deserve as human beings the right to be judged in this as in every other situation as individuals, and not wholesale condemnation simply because they belong to a race or nationality with which we just now chance to be at war.

A letter written by a large number of ministers of Santa Barbara, California, to their Japanese fellow-townsmen, who were being evacuated, is most pertinent. They wrote: "For two generations you have been a valuable influence in our community. By your industry, intelligence, friendliness and sincerity you have won the respect of your neighbors. You have added greatly to our resources and to our moral and religious culture. The tragedy of a war between our country and Japan which is not of your making nor of your choosing makes it necessary that we be separated for a time, but we assure you that our friendship has not been disturbed. May God keep you safe and return you to us unharmed in body, mind and spirit." Surely a people whom they so highly esteem, and whom they hope to receive back once the emergency has passed, we can receive and give refuge and human consideration during this period of crisis.

We of America can bring no honor to ourselves nor commend Democracy and the American way of life to others by surrendering to hysteria, or persecuting

First Methodist Church

Rufus C. Baker, D.D., Minister

Leonard J. Sweet, Associate Minister

Spruce at Fourteenth Street

Boulder, Colorado

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the enemy within our gates, little less the loyal,
American-born and law-abiding Japanese who consider
America ~~as~~ their home.

Your several statements on this question and your
continued effort to keep the people of Colorado from
surrendering to prejudice and base passions in this
crisis is most commendable and greatly appreciated by
us.

Sincerely yours,

Rufus C. Baker

W. F. Atkins

April 21, 1942

Dr. Rufus C. Baker
First Methodist Church
Spruce at Fourteenth Street
Boulder, Colorado

My dear Dr. Baker:

May I thank you and the members of the Ministers Association of Boulder for the fine letter of April seventeenth regarding my attitude toward ~~Japanese-Americans~~, particularly, those Japanese, both citizens and nationals, who are being evacuated from the Pacific Coast.

I am speaking my feelings all over Colorado, and up until now I have been met with sympathy and understanding. I believe that if we will continue to carry the banner and try to show the people the true philosophy of this situation, we shall convince them and turn this apparent difficulty into a benefit for all of our people.

Yours sincerely,

Governor of Colorado

RLC:mlp

A letter to U.S. Attorney Thomas J. Morrissey (c. June or July, 1942) documents Carr's opposition to the denial of the Civil Rights of Japanese-Americans and also asks for clarification on who has jurisdiction over the Japanese people who are coming to Colorado from the West Coast:

WJF - aliens

Honorable Thomas J. Morrissey
United States Attorney
District of Colorado
Post Office Building
Denver, Colorado

My dear Mr. Morrissey:

A problem has developed in Colorado in common with the other inland states of the Rocky Mountain West. It grows out of a recent Order of the President, establishing military zones along the Pacific Coast, within which enemy aliens may not remain during the war emergency. No official communication has reached this office. But our information is that not only persons who are suspected of active, actual enmity against our country are to be transferred, but that persons of American birth of Japanese racial origin and so-called Japanese nationals as well are being urged to leave the restricted zones immediately.

As the result of this, many persons, both American citizens and such Japanese nationals who, because of their failure or legal inability to become naturalized, are coming to Colorado seeking a haven where they may earn a living and support their families during the war.

You will remember that when the proposed transfer of alien enemies from military zones first arose, it was announced by me as Governor that this state would do everything to cooperate with the Government and with the military forces to care for undesirables who might be brought to Colorado. This was not an invitation to anybody however. Regardless of our attitude or of our desires, they are moving and being moved and no state--no governor--can or should attempt to deny them admission. Federal laws and orders in a war emergency dictate our position. That statement dealt with persons who, it was understood, would be deprived of their freedom and under full and complete supervision and control.

That policy is here reiterated. As one of the forty-eight states, Colorado has cooperated and will continue to cooperate to the ultimate of her abilities and her possessions in the solution of every problem which may confront us.

These other persons, who, because of the war conditions, are obliged to come or who have already reached Colorado, present another question. It demands immediate action by Federal agencies. While many look to the state government for the control of this situation, it is clear under the

Constitution and the law that it is a matter which is almost entirely within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. It is because of this fact that I address you, as the Colorado representative of the Department of Justice.

An emergency has arisen which calls for a definition of powers and a statement of policy generally, as well as for consideration and treatment of the separate individuals.

Letters have come inquiring if there are farm lands in Colorado which may be rented. Many communications have been received from land owners who offer to rent or donate their lands to these newcomers. Some have written asking for work. Many local people want to know if they may employ American citizens and enemy aliens.

From other angles come protests wherein our people demand the immediate internment of all such persons, regardless of their legal status, in concentration camps where they may be closely guarded. At least one mass meeting has been held. Loose talk and wild threats are made by others which imperil our own citizens in the control or who may be taken prisoner by Japanese.

Colorado has no alien land law. This state bows to those principles of American government which give to American citizens the right to move freely from place to place, to earn a living as they deem fit or as circumstances allow, unhampered in their movements as individuals. The suggestion that an American citizen should be seized, deprived of his liberty, or otherwise placed under restraint without charge of misconduct and a hearing is unthinkable.

But for the protection of our public utilities, water supplies, munitions plants, of training schools and military establishments, as well as our people and their homes--for the protection of these very persons they should be induced to stay in places where their activities may be supervised and guarded. Under such an arrangement, all people, all property, every activity would be secure.

These persons bear identification cards, signed by Government officials on the West Coast, and therefore are to be accorded the same consideration and treatment under our laws as other citizens or non-naturalized persons who have entered this country legally.

Under the Constitution and the laws enacted thereunder, it be-

comes the duty and obligation of the Federal Government to deal with these problems immediately and definitely. These persons have the right to enter our state and to live here. But our present residents must be protected. On the other hand, these newcomers owe an obligation to themselves and to our country to conduct themselves with the utmost quietude and decorum. The policing of their activities is a great task. The safety of these persons is threatened if anything should develop which might create an emotional explosion.

They will soon be coming in such numbers that only a clear understanding of the law, of the policies of our Nation and the rights and obligations of all people will promote peace and understanding.

May I ask you to present this matter to the proper agency of the Federal Government to the end that these problems may be solved quickly, sanely and justly.

Coloradans stand ready and eager to perform any duty to uphold the hands of our Nation and her leaders. There is no task they would shirk. There is no obligation which they would avoid. Coloradans are American. There are no state lines in time of war. I await your advice and command.

Yours very truly,

A response by Carr June 2, 1942 to the Philips County Republican Committee, Rex Evans states that he would refuse to oblige the state to do the job of managing the internment camp:

Self - answer

June 2, 1942

Honorable Rex C. Evans, Chairman
Republican County Central Committee
Holyoke, Colorado

My dear Rex:

I am grateful to you for your letter regarding the proposed removal of Japanese evacuees to a reception center in Colorado. I am more than grateful for your defense of me against the man who said I had asked the Japanese here and was trying to bring them into the state. My position should be too well known for any American citizen to go wrong on it. If a reception center is established in Colorado, it will be done by the United States Government.

You will be interested to know that the Army has established rules under which Japanese may be brought into Colorado to work, which provides that the state and county officials shall assume the business of protecting them and guarding them and absolutely releasing the United States Government from responsibility in that respect. I turned it down as absolutely unacceptable and have written all the heads of the War Relocation Board and the Army that if they bring them here, it must be in accordance with the orders which evacuated them under the control and exclusive jurisdiction of the United States. I refuse to accept the obligation in any sense.

The people who hold the meeting should get word to Ben H. Eisenhower, Director of the War Relocation Board, and to General Dewitt, commanding the Third Corps Area in San Francisco. I have nothing in the world to do with it. The Federal Government does not ask me how it shall run its business until it finds a place where it thinks it can pass me a burden or get me to take the buck. I usually do whatever I can as a patriotic gesture, but that doesn't mean I like it a bit.

Thanks so much.

Very truly yours,

Governor of Colorado

RLC:mlp

Many Japanese-Americans wanted to work whether they were interned at the camps or lived on the outside. Because of the jurisdictional disputes with the federal government, however, Carr could not promise these Americans assistance:

June 3-1942

Hon. Ralph Carr
Governor of Colorado
Denver, Colorado

Your Excellency -

Through your good graces, may I ask
you to transmit this letter to whosoever that
might be interested?

I am a Sugar Technologist (can sugar)
from the Hawaiian Islands. Served as Chemist &
foreman of their sugar factories for 12 years. Was
at the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Experiment Station for 4 y.
Have had experience in construction and develop-
ment engineering - development of Lanai Island
for the Hawaiian Pineapple Co. Introduced the Papaya
into Southern California. Widely versed in sub-trop-
ical horticulture. Have been teaching gardening &
agriculture in the Los Angeles School System in
Adult Education until recently.

The sentiment here at Santa Anita
Center is a desire to go out to work. Would
be interested in a group of people as your favor.

P.S. I can organize a
group that would be an
asset to your State from
an agricultural standpoint.

Sincerely submitted
Kiyoshi Okamoto
District VII
1014 St. - Bk. 9 - Unit
Santa Anita Center
Arcadia, Calif.

Ref - alien
June 6, 1942

Mr. Kiyoshi Okamoto
District VII
10th Street, Block 9, Unit 4
Santa Anita Center
Arcadia, California

My dear Mr. Okamoto:

I think you should address the director of the War Relocation Board at San Francisco, California regarding your right to bring a group into Colorado either for the development of mines and mineral properties or for agricultural activities.

This has been taken entirely out of the hands of the Governors of any of the states, and I cannot offer you either advice or encouragement. I think you know my attitude and the policy which I have followed with respect to all persons of Japanese origin and know that whenever the United States says that they shall be removed, Colorado will receive them and do everything which our Constitution, our patriotism and our Americanism dictate.

Very truly yours,

Governor of Colorado

RLC:mlp

With many young men in the military, there were major labor shortages throughout the state, especially in the agriculture industry. This letter from the Mayor of Julesburg and Carr's response documents the labor shortage and Carr's efforts to get the internees employment:

GEORGE H. THOMPSON
JULESBURG, COLORADO

Dear Governor Carr =

Just a little note about our beet labor condition = we are not going to be able to get beets out this fall with the labor at hand. If weather conditions are unfavorable there could be a tremendous loss in money - as well as in sugar. Much of the labor we started out with this spring, and who have been receiving as much as \$5.00 per day for common farm work, has gone to Disney, Hely and other points where higher wages are being paid in Government work.

As you know, it requires experienced people to harvest beets. There is a supply of experienced help, willing and anxious to work, among the Japanese farmers from the west coast. I have tried to get some of these families for farm work here but with no results = I do not think I have approached the matter in the proper way = I know of two families, who are experienced, who have relatives here, there should be quite a few who know how to do this work, now in camp in

GEORGE H. THOMPSON
JULESBURG, COLORADO

Colorado. I know it is not practical to release large numbers of these people to be turned loose in the beet fields — but — would it not be good common sense to select some who know the work and release them to a responsible person, who can give them proper employment — under favorable conditions — we have room for 15 to 20 — I have good living quarters for them — Can you advise me just how to go about this — who to see — and what to do —

The time is short and the need is great =

Thanks you for your advice

Sincerely
George Thompson

August 21st =


August 28, 1942

Honorable George H. Thompson
Julesburg, Colorado

My dear Mayor Thompson:

I have your letter about the labor problem in your section. While I am ostensibly in California only for the purpose of helping to launch a ship which will go into the British Navy and try to solve the submarine menace, I am really here for the purpose of trying to get to an understanding with the Army and the War Relocation people about the proper use of Japanese to harvest our crops in Colorado. The first of these people have already gotten to Granada, and I think the arrangements which I am making will enable us to take the best who are willing to work in our fields and bring benefits to Colorado.

It really remains only for local officials to agree that they will enforce the law and protect persons and property, and then arrangements I am certain can be made for the employment of these people during the season when they are needed, and then they will be returned to the reception center.

This must be the solution, and it is the real reason why I came to California.

Very truly yours,

Governor of Colorado

RLC:mlp

Dictated in Los Angeles August 26, 1942
Sent to Denver for transcription.