

Court should uphold internees' lost rights

The Supreme Court, at the request of the Reagan administration, will review the validity of a 1983 lawsuit seeking reparations for citizens who were interned during the detention of Japanese-Americans during World War II.

The question comes 42 years after the court condoned the government's program of placing 120,000 American citizens and aliens of Japanese ancestry in detention camps as a "military necessity."

The case should be heard, and the government should defend itself in court. Of course, in this case the government is defenseless.

A U.S. appeals court dismissed many of the claims in the case but ruled that the case could proceed. The Justice Department is seeking to disclaim any governmental liability and stop the case.

The court ruled that the grounds for the lawsuit were lacking until a 1982 congressional commission urged the United States to "redress the personal injustice" done to the internees.

The Justice Department's appeal rests on technical issues of jurisdiction and statute of limitations. Thus, the government is using technicalities to obscure its responsibility to its citizens and residents.

A central issue the Supreme Court is sure to deal with is false evidence President Franklin Roosevelt's administration presented to the court to convince it of the "military necessity" of the detention program.

A congressional commission released a report in 1983 saying that the program was motivated by "racial prejudice, war hysteria and failure of political leadership" and not by military considerations.

Roosevelt's administration fraudulently withheld vital documents that showed the detention program was not needed, including reports from the FBI and members of naval intelligence that concluded careful watching of suspicious people was all that was needed to avert the threat of sabotage.

The administration of that time also failed to refute the assertion that the attack on Pearl Harbor had been aided by sabotage and espionage by ethnic Japanese in Hawaii. It knew this assertion was false.

The conviction of a Japanese-American who refused to report for detention was overturned in 1983, largely on the basis of the false evidence provided by the government at the time.

Thus, the enormity of the program was worsened by the fraud and hysteria used to support it. It is not so surprising that the public could be so swayed, but it is shocking that even the Supreme Court could support the internment program.

The internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II is a blot on American representative democracy. The internment camps disproved the old notion that "it can't happen here" — referring to the concentration camps of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union — not only can it happen here, but it can happen with the Supreme Court's approval.

President Gerald Ford proclaimed in 1976 that the war-time detention had been wrong. However, such a proclamation does not help those interned recover what they lost when they were taken from their homes during World War II.

Though the gears of the justice machine move slowly, even 40 years is not too long for the government to be held accountable for violating the Constitution.



Letters

Illegal entry

If there is any "anomaly" in a situation where it is illegal for aliens to enter the country, but not illegal for employers to hire them, the fault lies in the law that makes entry illegal (ODE editorial, Nov. 17). After all, it is also not illegal to sell bread to an alien, or to buy a car from him.

The right to exchange one's labor for money or other agreed upon compensation is a basic economic right of all human beings, not just those who have papers issued by some government agency.

The government has no business forcing employers to police its arbitrary policy of discrimination against people on the basis of birth place and parentage.

What principle gives John Q. Peasant from Vietnam or Mexico any less right to try to make a living and support his family than John Q. Public from Eugene? And who are you or Congress to tell either of them what job they may apply for? The right way to resolve the "anomaly" is to open our borders to anyone who wants to work here.

You prefer a plan where guest workers will work for American employers, but not as prospective citizens. They won't have

the same status as other workers, because they will remain citizens of their homelands, to which they must return whenever the government decrees they are no longer wanted.

This is surely a practical compromise, with economic benefit for both worker and employer, but not very original. P.W. Botha would be proud.

Joseph W. Dehn III
Eugene

Walk don't ride

It is very sad to note that in one of the state's finest centers of higher education there are a number of students who still do not read. But the surprising coincidence that often goes unnoticed is the fact that all these illiterate people ride bicycles!

You have probably seen them careening down University sidewalks, oblivious to the bright yellow "Walk/Dismount" signs painted on the cement beneath them. However, I am not suggesting that all cyclists pedal their machines over our walkways.

Probably the majority of cyclists at the University obey the common-sense safety rule that one should not speed through crowds of pedestrians. These people are demonstrating their consideration and respect for others by their behavior. This cannot be said for the cyclist/marauder who speeds across campus dodging hapless foot-bound students.

We are being oppressed by a minority. An arrogant, rude few are violating the rights of the many. They use their superior speed to force their way upon us, and they all seem to believe that they are the sole exception to the "no bikes" rule designed to protect everybody.

Now that the rainy season is upon us, the danger of wet brakes failing to stop before impact is a serious possibility. Campus security officers are outnumbered and have only been able to achieve small victories in this battle.

The rule of law is being rid-

den upon. Do the University a favor; read this letter to any cycle-sidewalk riders you know.

Randy MacDonald
Student Senate President

Intolerable

Tolerance: Is it always a virtuous attribute? It is often claimed to be by many who buy into the situational ethics of left-wing liberalism — where right and wrong ebb and flow with the tide of popular opinion. It isn't if you believe there are certain permanent moral absolutes in this universe that must be adhered to.

Let's examine the consistency of this open-minded liberalism that lectures against the evils of "intolerance" and "discrimination" (a form of intolerance). We must ignore for a moment, however, that "consistency" is not a required component of situational ethics.

What about tolerance? Are these open-minded left-wingers tolerant of capital punishment, abortion restrictions, laboratory animal testing, nuclear power, snail darter depletion, creation science, Apartheid, intolerance?

And how about discrimination? Does liberalism shun all discrimination against conservative profit-motivated businessmen, abortion clinic picketers, strip miners, fundamentalist Christians, out-of-the-closet monogamous "straights" (homophobics)?

Check out the irony of the self-righteous left-winger hypocritically proclaiming, "If there's one thing I just can't stand, it's intolerance."

I submit that there is nothing inherently wrong with intolerance. In fact, it is an appropriate natural counterpoint to any deeply held conviction. However, it is amusing to find those who claim munificent tolerance but who in reality are so intolerant that they can't tolerate intolerance in others.

Jon Wollander
Eugene

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