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SALT MEADOW

December 16, 1946

Dearest Eleanor,

Thank you for the copy of the letter from the Acting Commissioner of Immigration, T. B. Shoemaker, with reference to Minenori Aoyama.

Isn't there a "human rights commission" somewhere that could deal with this situation? What on earth can justify our making operative now a law we have evaded enforcing for years? What justice can there be in now sending back to Japan, with undoubted hardship to him, a person whom we have known for years to be in this country "illegally"?

Where in this country, among fair minded people, is there any defence of the law discriminating against Japanese who came to this country after 1924?

Mr. Shoemaker's letter to you says Aoyama is being departed because he is "an alien, ineligible to citizenship and not entitled to enter the United States under any exception of law". But we have known for years that these men have been in this country, and we have allowed them to remain here. In this case, the man has been here for twenty-one years and has a good personal, and employment, record. Now he is sent back to Japan with which he has no contacts whatever. His deportation constitutes hardship, in the legal, as well as the general, sense.

So much for the whole group of Japanese of whom Aoyama is an illustration.

On Aoyama personally: Mr. Shoemaker's letter to you points out that Aoyama was convicted, last spring, for the "crime of perjury". The "perjury" consists of saying that he came to this country one year sooner than he had actually arrived. He had been told that those who came to this country after 1924, would be deported. He vehemently wanted to stay in this country to which all his interests were committed, and in making his replies he committed the "crime of perjury" by moving the date back one year.

This is now described by our Government officials as "moral turpitude" (see the last paragraph of Shoemaker's letter to you.)

I am well aware that officials have to have laws to cover their actions. Also that they are supposed to enforce laws, even if the laws are unjust. It is quite true that this case illustrates a law that should be repealed. Meanwhile, in our period of postwar settlement, are we, in the name of justice, suddenly to send backmen who have been in this country, have a good record, and have given every evidence that they want to stay here and that they would have become citizens if they had been allowed to?

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The whole thing seems crassly stupid.

There may be some Japanese in this country who should be deported, but to invoke deportation for workmen who came here to find a better way of life and who have been allowed to stay here for twenty-one years, seems an incredible miscarriage of justice in the postwar adjustments.

I realize that there is no use in calling attention to all this on the part of a lot of minor bureaucrats. To do so is merely to invite a sheaf of letters citing chapter and verse.

But isn't there some way of getting the whole situation under review by those capable of weighing the essential lack of logic and lack of justice of this procedure, against its superficial legal correctness?

As ever,

*Esther*