

HOW TO ATTACK THE NEWSPAPER USE OF "JAP"

(Including a sample letter of protest and a case history of an actual campaign.)

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Japanese American Citizens League

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Typed by
Shosuke Sasaki

INTRODUCTION

Despite some degree of improvement in recent years, no one can deny that quite often a non-white American in the United States has to quite bluntly insist upon it if he is going to be treated with the respect and dignity which is the birthright of any human being. Behind almost every improvement in the public treatment of non-whites in this country has been the efforts of determined individuals and groups who fought to bring about the change. This does not mean that a Nisei should walk around with a chip on his shoulder looking for imagined slights or insults, but it does mean that crawling behind a servile or boot-licking attitude toward displays of prejudice by whites will not, in the foreseeable future, be effective in eliminating the remaining indignities imposed upon the Nisei by those Americans whose ancestors happened to migrate to America earlier than the Japanese did.

The noticeable reduction in the use of the term "Jap" in American publications during the past 10 years did not arise from a spontaneous improvement in the standards of the publishing industry. The reduction occurred chiefly because of the strong and repeated protests made by certain individuals and by such organizations as the J.A.C.L. and the American Newspaper Guild.

The fact that the newspaper use of "Jap" has been practically stopped in every locality where adequately strong protests have been made indicates that the practice can be eliminated within a year or two throughout the United States if only enough persons of Japanese ancestry will undertake to make known their objections and to exert enough sustained pressure against offending publications.

The aim of this brochure is to help those persons who as true Americans would like to insist that the Japanese be treated by American publications with no less respect than that shown to Italians, Jews, or Chinese.

DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

When the first effective battle against the use of "Jap" in New York newspapers was launched in 1952, the campaign had to be fought without any support from dictionary definitions. The dictionaries of that day either ignored the word or defined it merely as a colloquial abbreviation. As a result of the publicity connected with the 1952 campaign and as a result of a special campaign directed at certain dictionaries in 1958 by the J.A.C.L., practically all the most widely used dictionaries now published in the United States give recognition to the offensive nature of the term. Thus, a major weapon of decisive importance is now available for use against offending publications. With the weight of dictionary authorities now overwhelmingly on our side, no sensible editor will be free to argue that "Jap" is an inoffensive and acceptable abbreviation. The following list of definitions should invariably be included as a part of every initial letter of protest sent to any editor or publisher.

DICTIONARY

DEFINITION

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) "Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of the English Language - International Edition" printed 1958 by Funk & Wagnalls Co., New York. | Jap (jap) adj. & n. Slang Japanese: an opprobrious usage |
| (2) "A Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage" by Bergen Evans and Cornelia Evans, printed in 1957 by Random House, New York. | Japanese, the shortened form Jap is derogatory and should not be used. |
| (3) "A Dictionary of American-English Usage" by Margaret Nicholson, printed in 1957 by Oxford University Press. | Jap, Japanese Nipponese. Jap is colloquial and understandably resented. |
| (4) "Thorndike Barnhart High School Dictionary" printed 1957 by Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, N. Y. | Jap (jap), adj., n. Informal and contemptuous. Japanese. |
| (5) "American College Dictionary" printed in 1957 by Random House, New York. | Jap (jap), adj., n. colloq. & derogatory. Japanese. |
| (6) "Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language" College Edition printed in 1957 by World Publishing Co. | Jap (jap) n., adj. Japanese: a shortened form often expressing contempt, hostility, etc. |
| (7) "Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged" printed 1961 by G. & C. Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass. | jap/'jap/ n - s usu cap, often attrib (by shortening): JAPANESE - often used disparagingly |

SAMPLE LETTER OF PROTEST

ANY CHAPTER
JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

Mr. _____, Editor
Any American Newspaper
Any Address
Any American City, Any State

Dear Mr. _____:

No person of Japanese ancestry likes to be referred to as a "Jap" and the members of the organization which I represent are no exception to this distaste for that word. We are not, however, protesting your publication's use of that term solely because of personal feelings. This letter is based on reasons more compelling and serious.

In the present cold war, on whose outcome the very existence of this nation depends, the United States needs every friend it can get. When billions of dollars are being spent abroad by our Government in a desperate effort to gain friends and to offset ceaseless anti-American Communist propaganda, I am sure you will agree that American publications can not afford to help create enemies of this country through reckless displays of contempt for the dignity of other peoples.

As the only major industrial nation in the Orient, it is well recognized that the loss of Japan to Communist domination would be a major disaster to the free world. There is no doubt that most Japanese would like to remain friendly to the United States, but it should be kept in mind that they are also human and sensitive.

One of the basic conditions necessary for the development of genuine friendship between two peoples is that neither side shall make a regular practice of referring to the other by derisive or offensive epithets. Your publication does not refer to the Italians as "Wops", the Israeli as "Kikes", nor the Chinese as "Chinks". The word "Jap" is in exactly the same category and most dictionaries printed in the United States in recent years give recognition to the offensive nature of the term.

A list of such dictionaries and their definitions is enclosed.

How strongly the Japanese feel about the problem was demonstrated by the Japanese press in 1957 when Japan's delegate to the United Nations, Ambassador Koto Matsudaira, appeared on a television interview in New York and failed to

TACTICS AND STRATEGY

The preceding is a sample of a letter of protest to be signed by the president or other officer of a J.A.C.L. chapter using J.A.C.L. letterhead paper. The body of the letter may be used without change or may be altered to fit the requirements of each locality. With minor changes in the first paragraph, the letter can also be sent by any individual as a personal communication. The letter is included in this brochure primarily to acquaint J.A.C.L. members with the arguments which have proved most effective during the past 10 years, and to provide a ready draft which can be copied by those chapters whose members do not care to go to the trouble of composing their own.

Usually a letter from an organization carries more weight than a letter from an individual, and wherever possible, it is best to have the protest sent under an organization letterhead. Furthermore, the use of organization letterheads need not be restricted to letterheads of the J.A.C.L. In fact, protests by other persons and groups in some cases can be more effective than protests from Nisei sources. The best example of this was in 1952 when the American Newspaper Guild publicly went on record as being opposed to the use of "Jap". Since many Nisei belong to church and fraternal groups, it is suggested that wherever possible officers of such organizations be approached and persuaded to place their organizations on record as being opposed to the use of the word "Jap" and to send letters making known their stand to offending newspapers in the vicinity.

In obtaining help from other organizations it should be kept in mind that they will always include some members who will feel that such activity is outside the proper scope of the aims of their organization. To counter such criticism, the best defense is to show that actions opposing the use of the term "Jap" is gaining the organization favorable publicity. In 1952, clippings from the Pacific Citizen and from the English sections of Japanese language newspapers proved to be a useful defense against those Guild members who did not approve of the Guild's efforts. Moreover, the clippings were highly encouraging to the Guild officers who actively campaigned against the newspaper use of "Jap". It is extremely important that the Pacific Citizen give unfailing publicity in its pages to any help given by non-J.A.C.L. persons or groups.

Nisei who happen to own stock in a corporation which publishes an offending newspaper or magazine should make use of their position as part owners. A letter of protest to the company president by one who can identify himself as a stockholder is almost certain to receive careful attention. In 1952, such a letter sent to the president of Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation not only stopped Movietone News from calling the Japanese "Japs", but resulted in the elimination of the word "Jap" from all other motion picture productions of the company.

For those who prefer to compose their own letters of protest, a few points should be kept in mind. The average newspaper is a business whose chief purpose is to make the largest possible profit for its owners with the least possible effort. The word "Jap" is to them a very handy abbreviation and a plea for discontinuing its use made by a tiny minority group basing its arguments on fair-play or non-discrimination

will most likely be ignored. The only effective strategy is to show that it is to the offending publication's own interest to stop calling the Japanese "Japs". The sample letter of protest does this by showing that the use of the term "Jap" is damaging to the United States and helpful to the Communists.

No apology or regret should ever be expressed concerning the imagined "inconvenience" to the newspaper which would result from the proposed elimination of the word "Jap". Such misdirected sympathy weakens one's whole argument and amounts to an admission that there is some justification for using the word. Keep in mind that there is no justification any time, any place for referring to ethnic or racial groups by means of derogatory epithets. Rest assured that no newspaper is going to lose even a single dollar in profits by discontinuing the use of "Jap".

The stand taken by the American Newspaper Guild in 1952 is not mentioned in the sample letter of protest because many newspaper managements might react in a negative way. The Guild is a labor union made up of those who work in the newspaper industry. Its voice is usually effective in only those newspapers which it has already organized. Managements of non-unionized newspapers must be assumed to be against the Guild for economic reasons and mention of the Guild in support of our protest is not likely to produce a favorable reaction.

Most editors when confronted with the list of dictionary definitions and the arguments contained in the sample letter of protest will cease the use of "Jap". One must be prepared, however, not to be discouraged by the few who will at first refuse to comply with our protest. Any profession includes in its ranks a certain number incapable of sound reasoning and the newspaper business is no exception to this general rule. A reply from an editor rejecting our arguments should not be quietly accepted as final, but the main effort should then be directed to bringing the problem to the attention of others higher up in the control of the publication. By sending letters to other members of the newspaper's management, it is highly probable that at least one or two persons can be found among them who will take action to bring about at least partial compliance with one's request.

Offers of partial compliance should not be angrily rejected nor spurned. Such an offer shows that the newspaper management is on the defensive and has retreated. The New York J.A.C.L. found that by continuing to keep a close watch on such papers and by having members continue to send protests on suitable occasions the word "Jap" finally ceased to appear in their pages.

THE CASE OF THE NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM AND THE SUN

The NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM AND THE SUN has long been and continues to be an excellent newspaper. The following account of its past differences with the New York Chapter of the J.A.C.L. should not be construed as any reflection on the newspaper's quality nor on the fairness it has otherwise generally shown in its policies toward the Japanese and the Nisei both prior to and since the end of World War II. During World War II and for a number of years thereafter, however, it displayed a much greater propensity toward the use of the term "Jap" than most of the other newspapers in the area. This was partly due to the greater coverage it gave to news about Japan than other afternoon and evening papers printed in New York. The following series of letters is reproduced here chiefly to acquaint members of other J.A.C.L. chapters with the arguments and counter-arguments used in an actual campaign.

After keeping a close check on the numerical frequency of the appearance of the word "Jap" in the newspaper for several months, and after finding that protests by the New York Newspaper Guild were being completely ignored, certain members of the New York J.A.C.L. decided to take action. The greatest frequency of the use of "Jap" was in a column devoted to a daily summary of world news edited by C. E. Fisher. He was selected as the target of the initial protest.

August 7, 1952

Mr. C. E. Fisher
New York World-Telegram and The Sun
125 Barclay Street
New York 15, New York

Dear Sir:

Perhaps you are not aware that a resolution opposing the use of the term "Jap" was passed unanimously by the American Newspaper Guild at its annual convention early last month in Portland, Oregon. A similar resolution was passed by the Newspaper Guild of New York on February 19, 1952.

For your information, I am enclosing a clipping from the New York Guild's paper "Frontpage" which contains the full text of the resolution which was adopted in July.

Very truly yours,

Shosuke Sasaki

Resolution by American Newspaper Guild

WHEREAS the term "Jap" is regarded by the Japanese as an epithet of derision, and its use is resented by all Japanese and persons of Japanese ancestry, and

WHEREAS the term "Jap" with no period at the end is not recognized as an accepted abbreviation and

The use of the term "Jap" completely nullifies in the eyes of

the Japanese all American claims to being the world's champion of human dignity, and

WHEREAS the Guild has always opposed the use in newspapers of terms of racial, religious or national derision, and has upon occasion persuaded newspapers to give up the use of such terms, and

WHEREAS the cooperation of the United States and Japan is urgently needed if they are to preserve their independence against Soviet encroachments and propaganda,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the American Newspaper Guild in Convention at Portland, Oregon, July 7, 1952, urges for consideration of all newspapers in the United States and Canada, the discontinuance of the use of the word "Jap" or similar derogatory terms, by all newspapers, in stories, editorial and headlines; calls upon unit grievance committees to explain to newspaper managements the Guild's reasons for objecting to it, and orders that proper publicity be given this resolution.

Mr. Fisher's reply was prompt and curt.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun
August 8, 1952

Mr. Shosuke Sasaki
150 West 104th Street
New York 25, New York

Dear Mr. Sasaki:

Thanks for your letter of August 7. It gives me an opportunity to inform you that I am responsible only to the New York World-Telegram and Sun for my writings.

I cannot allow the American Newspaper Guild to edit my column on world events.

Respectfully yours,

C. E. Fisher

Mr. Fisher's argument was not permitted to stand unchallenged.

August 11, 1952

Mr. C. E. Fisher
New York World-Telegram and The Sun
125 Barclay Street
New York, 15, New York

Dear Mr. Fisher:

Thank you for your letter of August 8th. It is difficult to understand how a person of your position and knowledge of English could have misunderstood the resolution of the American Newspaper Guild so completely as to believe that it is an attempt to "edit" your column. The wording of the resolution is sufficiently careful and precise to make your accusation utterly groundless. Moreover, if you meant exactly what you said in the second sentence of your letter, your sense of responsibility impresses me as being sorely in need of development. Surely you did not intend to deny your responsibility to God and to your country.

The term "Jap" is the exact equivalent of such terms as "Kike", "Nigger", "Chink", and "Wop". The Guild's resolution has received the concurrence and approval of sympathetic editors whose pride in their rights and prerogatives is no less strong than yours. Your letter is the first which refuses to recognize the validity of the Guild's stand, and your column is the only one in New York which still continues to call the Japanese "Japs".

World War II was ended seven years ago, and there is no valid reason why the Japanese alone should continue to be singled out for this particular kind of humiliation which in net outcome has often proved more harmful to those who inflict it than to its intended victims. Perhaps the seriousness of the problem can best be illustrated by the widely publicized fact that in the first year of the Korean conflict the United States Army suffered innumerable needless casualties as a result of Korean resentment against being called "Gooks" by American troops.

In view of the fact that the American Government is spending billions of dollars abroad in a desperate effort to gain friends, it is high time that the fostering of anti-American animosity among the Japanese by means of gratuitous insults in the American press be recognized as a disservice to the nation. I doubt whether you would deliberately insert pro-Communist propaganda in your column even if your employers permitted or ordered you to do so. By deliberately continuing to call the Japanese "Japs", however, you are no less effectively helping the Communists to swell the ranks of those who hate us.

The problem deserves the thoughtful concern of any true American interested in the eventual attainment of a lasting peace and in the future of his country. It is far too serious for you to evade by specious arguments about your "responsibility".

Very truly yours,

Shosuke Sasaki

The following was the final letter received from Mr. Fisher.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun
August 13, 1952

Mr. Shosuke Sasaki
150 West 104th Street
New York 25, New York

Dear Mr. Sasaki:

This will acknowledge your reply of the 11th of August, 1952.

I have read it with interest.

Cordially yours,

C. E. Fisher

On August 26, 1952, another member of the New York J.A.C.L. sent a personal letter to another editor of the same newspaper. His letter and the reply he received are shown below.

August 26, 1952

Miss Patricia Brown, Women's Editor
New York World-Telegram and Sun
125 Barclay Street
New York 15, New York

Dear Miss Brown:

Let me say first that the WORLD-TELEGRAM AND SUN is the No. 1 metropolitan paper in our family and this letter is written entirely in a spirit of constructive criticism. It is a letter, however, which I must write and I will continue to write such letters so long as necessary.

As you know only too well, our entire country is now continuing its policy of strengthening friendships throughout the world powers; especially towards Japan. I believe you could ~~not do~~ worse harm than to head a good story with such a derogative and maliciously slandering headline carried over your otherwise splendid story of Japanese furniture fashions. (page 10, Tuesday, August 26 issue) As a World War II veteran, Pacific Theater of Operations, a Caucasian member of the Japanese American Citizens League and a free lance writer deeply interested in such matters, I know very well the use of the word "Jap" is bitterly and rightfully resented by those Americans of Japanese ancestry as well as the Japanese nationals.

Fully aware of the significance and the harmful usage of

this term, the American Newspaper Guild has this year made it full policy for its members to avoid the appearance of this word in print wherever and whenever possible. Other leading writers, commentators and public officials have also endorsed and follow the policy of not using such a term equivalent of such un-American terms as "nigger", "kike", "wop", "dago", "heine".

Please believe me when I say that the WORLD-TELEGRAM AND SUN will greatly strengthen its universal appeal and influence by being more careful in such details. I am sure you will agree that a good story deserves a good headline. Your newspaper is now the worst offender in such matters with several minority groups. Especially at this time when all possible efforts on your part are being made to further the election of General Eisenhower as president, it seems most foolish to antagonize any personal feelings.

I should appreciate the referral of this letter to your editorial board.

Very truly yours,

Everett James Starr

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

September 2, 1952

Mr. Everett James Starr
324 East 143rd St., Apt. 13C
New York 51, New York

Dear Mr. Starr:

Thank you so much for your letter of August 26th, and the very nice things you had to say about the World-Telegram and Sun.

I found the second paragraph of your letter most interesting. You mention that America is continuing its policy of strengthening friendship with Japan. You are completely correct, and it was exactly for that reason that we published the story on Mr. Kenmochi. We found his work delightful and were sure it would be of interest to our readers. He was a most charming person and we were delighted to have had an exclusive interview with him.

I, as Women's Editor, do not write the headlines which appear over the stories on my page. They are written by a special staff of men, many of whom, like yourself, are war veterans. I am absolutely certain there was no offense intended in the use of the word "Jap" in the headline. I might add that I am turning your letter over to them. I, myself, am interested to know that the usage is resented.

As you know, headlines in a newspaper are necessarily a matter of space - generally pretty tight space. Like all newspapers we abbreviate wherever possible in order to write a headline that is also a complete sentence. We constantly use words such as, "Yank," "Aussi," "Ike," - even "Dem Bums." The latter I am sure you recognize as a gesture of affection.

Again many thanks for your letter. It is always nice to hear from our readers.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia Brown
Women's Editor

It was obvious that further letters of protest would have to be aimed at higher echelons of the newspaper. The following editorial which appeared on July 30, 1952, was selected as providing a good point of departure.

WHY ARE WE HATED?

The ouster of all Americans from Iran has been demanded from the floor of the Iranian Parliament by Deputy Shams Ghanat-Abadi.

Ghanat-Abadi is not a Communist.

He is known as the right-hand man of Iran's leading religious figure, who in turn is a close supporter of Premier Mossadegh.

Anti-American feeling has been building up in Iran since the beginning of the oil dispute between Iran and Britain in which the United States figured as an ineffectual mediator. Contracts for the American military missions now in Iran expire in October and American officials there are worried, it is reported, that these contracts will not be extended if the current wave of anti-American feeling retains its strength.

Might it not be better for us to cancel these contracts of our own volition and get out of the country before being kicked out--and then not go back until we are invited?

The U.S. has given Iran loans and Point Four money, and has attempted to be helpful that country in many other ways. But we appear to have succeeded only in making ourselves misunderstood. Our motives are suspect. It is becoming unsafe for Americans to appear on the streets of Tehran.

It is time we were asking ourselves why so many people hate us. While Iran is an extreme case, anti-American feeling is gaining ground in most parts of the world. It is finding increasing expression in Britain and Western Europe, as well as in the so-called backward countries.

This poses a serious problem which demands a careful examination of our operations abroad.

Soviet propaganda can claim credit for some of the misunderstanding, but surely not for all of it. The Russians aren't that good.

Some of the fault must be in ourselves. We should find out what it is and how to correct it.

A foreign policy which makes enemies where it should be making friends obviously is unsound and dangerous, whatever its pretensions. This problem has been ignored too long, and the anti-American demonstrations in Iran are a clear warning of serious trouble ahead if the present trend isn't arrested and reversed.

Using the above editorial as an introductory topic of discussion, the following letter was written and sent to the executive editor of the newspaper.

September 10, 1952

Mr. Lee B. Wood, Executive Editor
New York World-Telegram and The Sun
125 Barclay Street
New York 15, New York

Dear Mr. Wood:

This is a belated reply to your editorial entitled "Why Are We Hated?" of July 30, 1952. You are correct in your belief that this hatred is not entirely the result of Soviet propaganda. Much of it is caused by our own stupidity. Had your editorial included a reference to the Communist-led anti-American riots in Japan, you might, for the sake of accuracy, have mentioned the seeds of anti-American hatred still being sown by your and other Scripps-Howard newspapers by their proclivity for the use of the derisive epithet "Jap". That term is the exact equivalent of such words as "Kike", "Wop", and "Chink".

Of all the forms of racial discrimination, few are as galling to its victims as being called insulting epithets, and few are as damaging to the reputation and popularity of those who practice it. The American press prides itself on being free and desires the world to recognize it as the voice of a free people. When such a press persists in calling any racial group by a viciously contemptuous term, the world is likely to regard it far more gravely than the rantings of propaganda organs such as "Pravda". Such a practice can be interpreted by others as nothing less than a reflection of American contempt for the right to human dignity of other peoples and as evidence of the unworthiness of America to exercise world leadership.

You may offer the excuse of claiming that your use of the term "Jap" is not intended to be derogatory and that you use it merely to save space. I would like to point out that your use of a derogatory term in order to save space does not in any way alter the derogatory nature of the term. Neither does such a reason reduce the resentment of the Japanese and persons of Japanese ancestry against the practice.

Sincerely yours,

Shosuke Sasaki

The following letter, obviously intended as a brush-off, was received without delay.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun
September 11, 1952

Mr. Shosuke Sasaki
150 West 104th Street
New York 25, New York

Dear Mr. Sasaki:

Thank you for your letter of the 10th. Your views are interesting.

I have not claimed any space-saving motive as you state.

Cordially yours,

Lee B. Wood

Mr. Wood was not permitted to drop consideration of the subject so easily. Within a few days he received the following letter.

September 15, 1952

Mr. Lee B. Wood, Executive Editor
New York World-Telegram and The Sun
125 Barclay Street
New York 15, New York

Dear Mr. Wood:

Thank you for your letter of September 11th. The objections which I have raised against the use of the term "Jap" are not merely my own personal views. They are shared by practically all Japanese.

It is interesting to learn that the use by your paper of the term "Jap" is not due to any space-saving motive. As

a regular reader of your paper and as a person of Japanese ancestry, I would like very much to know the exact reason or reasons which apparently serve to justify in your mind the continued use of that term.

Sincerely yours,

Shosuke Sasaki

All of the preceding letters of protest were sent as personal communications. A letter of protest using J.A.C.L. chapter letterhead paper which was to have been sent to the newspaper around this time was not written because of certain misunderstandings. The late Akira Hayashi, thereupon, stepped in and sent the following letter in his official capacity.

September 13, 1952

Mr. Lee B. Wood, Executive Editor
New York World-Telegram and The Sun
125 Barclay Street
New York City 15, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Wood:

Copies of your letter of September 11, addressed to Mr. Shosuke Sasaki, and of his letter of September 10, 1952, addressed to you have been brought to my attention. Since the Scripps-Howard chain boasts the slogan, "Give Light and the People Will Find Their Own Way," I feel that your letter and your attitude are in direct contradiction to your own creed.

The term "JAP" as used in your publication, is regarded as highly offensive by every member of the organization I represent, and by every decent-minded American familiar with its derisive connotation. Mr. Sasaki, in his letters to your organization, has succinctly explained why the terminology is obnoxious and detrimental to good public relations.

The "space saving motive", referred to in your letter, was apparently used as an explanation by another editor of your newspaper in reply to a letter of protest written by Mr. Everett James Starr. It is significant that your letter disclaims it.

The Japanese American Citizens League - Eastern District Council will appreciate knowing your reasons for this continuing practice of using the offensive term "JAP" which we most respectfully protest in the name of fair play, good journalism, and common decency.

Very sincerely yours,

Akira Hayashi, Chairman
Eastern District Council
Japanese American Citizens League

The copy of Mr. Wood's reply to Mr. Hayashi is not available. No change in the attitude of the newspaper was indicated.

Several Caucasian friends, who were not members of the J.A.C.L., helped in the campaign. Among them were Edward K. Hassett and Paul W. Proctor. The letter of protest written by Dr. Proctor is not available for reproduction here. The following is a reply to Dr. Proctor's letter.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun
September 17, 1952

Mr. Paul W. Proctor
145 Bleecker St.
New York 12, N. Y.

Re: Newspaper use of word "Jap".

Dear Mr. Proctor:

I have your letter of September 12th relative to the above subject. I don't think I need to tell you the Japanese people have no stronger friend in American journalism than Mr. Roy W. Howard, Editor and President of this newspaper.

The use of the word "Jap" has been thoroughly discussed with him and aside from the utilitarian value in headlines, which is very real but certainly is not the main reason for our use, the abbreviated word does not connote anything derogatory in the minds of the American people. There is nothing unfriendly about the use of the word "Jap", except perhaps, as you say, in the minds of the Japanese.

I must point out to you that we are printing newspapers in America for Americans who see nothing unfriendly or derogatory in the word.

I really feel that you are making a mountain out of a molehill.

Sincerely yours,

Lee B. Wood.

On the same day, Mr. Wood wrote the following letter of reply to Shosuke Sasaki's letter of September 15, 1952.

New
New York World-Telegram and The Sun
September 17, 1952

Mr. Shosuke Sasaki
150 West 104th Street
New York 25, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Sasaki:

Please let this acknowledge your letter of Sept. 15th.

The term "Jap" in the minds of American newspaper readers does not connote anything derogatory.

While you say it is offensive to you and other Japanese, may I point out that we are publishing newspapers in America where Americans do not regard the word as unfriendly.

Sincerely yours,

Lee B. Wood.

The mistaken line of reasoning used by Mr. Wood to defend the use of "Jap" could not be permitted to stand. After a careful analysis of Mr. Wood's letter, the following rebuttal was sent.

September 23, 1952

Mr. Lee B. Wood, Executive Editor
New York World-Telegram and The Sun
125 Barclay Street
New York 15, New York

Dear Mr. Wood:

Your attention is called to certain errors in assumptions and logic contained in your letter to me of September 17th.

The second sentence of your letter is in flat contradiction of fact. Most of the older residents of the Pacific Coast states know that the term "Jap" is derogatory. It frequently was used by certain newspapers there in connection with the sporadic anti-Japanese hate campaigns from around 1900 to around 1930. The term was invariably found in headlines and stories designed to create and inflame anti-Japanese prejudice. It was not used by those who understood and defended the Japanese who had settled on the West Coast. The term became a symbol of racial contempt through prolonged usage by unscrupulous promoters of racial misunderstanding and hatred. It is not a simple abbreviation such as "Swiss" which was never subjected to the unfortunate use which the term "Jap" was.

The concluding sentence of your letter implies the following:

1. That Americans of Japanese descent are not Americans.
2. That so long as Americans are unaware of the derogatory connotation of a word, you are justified in using it regardless of how the victims of the insult may feel.

3. That your estimate of the ignorance of your readers is the standard which guides you in the extent to which you feel justified in violating good taste and in using derisive epithets.
4. That your paper is intended strictly for domestic use and is not read or should not be read by non-Americans.

I shall not go into a detailed refutation of each of these four points. The mere statement of them should be sufficient to make apparent the unsoundness of your contentions.

Whether an epithet is offensive or not is a matter which depends on the reaction of the person to whom the epithet is applied, and not on the opinion of the user or the ignorance of third parties. Not even a moron would persist in calling a person by a name which that person resented, when at the same time the goodwill and friendship of that person were desired.

I would also like to point out that America is not a hermit nation. Your papers are bought and read by visitors and students from almost every corner of the world. The United States Government is encouraging the bringing of students to America from abroad in the hope of having them learn of American democracy through first hand observation. The students, visitors, and diplomats from Japan will not be able to avoid noticing your use of the term "Jap" and resenting it just as keenly as Americans of Japanese ancestry do now.

The New York Times and the New York Herald-Tribune have, as a matter of policy, wisely avoided the use of the term "Jap". Many newspapers now use the word "Japan" as an adjective in place of "Japanese". "Jap." with a period at the end is also an accepted abbreviation.

Sincerely yours,

Shosuke Sasaki.

Although the following reply from Mr. Wood disclosed no change in his position, it lacked the self-righteous and indignant tone of his preceding replies.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun
September 25, 1952

Mr. Shosuke Sasaki
150 West 104th Street
New York 25, New York

Dear Mr. Sasaki:

This will acknowledge your letter of the 23rd.

There is nothing that I care to add to my previous letters to you.

Very truly yours,

Lee B. Wood

The New York J.A.C.L. meeting for September, 1952, was devoted almost entirely to a discussion of the letters to and from the editors of the NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM AND THE SUN. The following resolution, prepared by Everett James Starr, was passed without dissent.

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the careless and inappropriate use of the word "Jap" in all public relations media such as radio, television, movies, and press is offensive and derogative to both Americans of Japanese descent and to Japanese nationals proper, and

WHEREAS, the National Japanese American Citizens League, and numerous civic, cultural, educational, and labor bodies have, in keeping with true American ideals of fair play, made strong efforts to discourage the use of all derogatory and slandering terms, and

WHEREAS, a committee formed within this organization has determined that locally the worst offender in this respect is the NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM AND THE SUN, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the New York Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League request that a careful and thoughtful reappraisal be made by the executive management of the NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM AND THE SUN through which a new policy may be effected to prohibit the usage of the term "Jap" in headlines as well as in whatever editorial and news matter said management may govern, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Chapter direct its president to present this resolution together with a letter of transmittal to the highest executive echelon of the NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM AND THE SUN.

Passed by unanimous vote of approval in regular official meeting this 25th day of September, 1952, by the New York Chapter, Japanese American Citizens League.

Attest: Woodrow W. Asai
President

By: Ricki Suzuki
Recording Secretary

Copies of the above resolution together with letters identical in text to the letter shown below, which was drafted by Everett James Starr, were sent to Roy W. Howard, President and Editor of the newspaper, N. S. MacNeish, Business Manager of the newspaper, W. W. Hawkins, Chairman of the Board of E. W. Scripps Co., and Charles E. Scripps, Director of E. W. Scripps Co.

NEW YORK CHAPTER
JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

November 7, 1952

Mr. Charles E. Scripps, Director
E. W. Scripps Co.
230 Park Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Scripps:

I have been directed to submit the enclosed official resolution on behalf of this Chapter. I have withheld such action pending a review of the facts to determine whether any change in your policies would be revealed; also waiting for the National Election activities to subside, that you might be less under pressures.

This Chapter and its individual members have tried consistently to offer only constructive criticism through normal and logical personnel. The enclosed copies of our correspondence with your staff members, however, will prove that in this case our criticism has not been given an open, intelligent or business-like reception. We have therefore with this resolution tried to step over the normal chain of responsibility.

You will note in the enclosed photostats the differences of excuses and attitudes. The abrupt, curt dismissal of our presentation by your Mr. Wood is singularly contemptuous of your expressed editorial "platforms" and directly contrary to the higher principles of better American journalism.

Inasmuch as recent policy changes and improvements in such malpractices have been made by other leading newspapers, radio and TV stations, periodicals and other media, we believe we are on the right path in our efforts to strengthen America through the elimination of the use of all derogatory expressions such as "Jap." We can not feel that Mr. Spyros Skouras, President of 20th Century-Fox, is so entirely wrong in his enclosed letter to our Mr. Sasaki.

We sincerely trust that you will give our Resolution your careful consideration. We trust that you will review these enclosures to gain a glimpse of the cooperative spirit in which we have tried to express our distaste for all things harmful to America. We believe we are worthy of a more adequate, fairer and competent reception by your publication.

If it is possible to discuss this matter with you personally at your convenience, would you kindly so advise us?

Cordially yours,

Woodrow W. Assi
President, New York Chapter

Although the resolution and the letter signed by the chapter president did not produce immediate agreement with our request, they were treated with much more than the courtesy usually shown to protests from individuals. The following reply from the controlling management of the newspaper came from none other than Mr. Roy W. Howard, himself.

SCRIPPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPERS

November 15, 1952

Woodrow W. Asai, Esq.
President, New York Chapter,
Japanese American Citizens League
Hamilton Grange Station, P. O. Box 75
New York 31, N. Y.

My dear Mr. Asai:

This is in reply to yours of November 7th and to a duplicate copy sent to Mr. W. W. Hawkins, who is not presently active in the editorial conduct of the World-Telegram and Sun.

With complete respect for your right to a dissenting opinion, I feel that the issue you have raised is a misdirected effort likely to hinder, rather than promote, Japanese-American good-will.

It should be obvious to you that no offense is intended, and that no evil purpose of ours will be served, if on occasion the term "Jap" appears in our papers. However, both your correspondence and that of Mr. Sasaki evidence a lack of familiarity with Scripps-Howard editorial policy, both before and since the war, and of our sustained efforts in the interest of Japanese-American friendship.

If, as would seem to be the case, you and your organization are unfamiliar with that record, such Japanese as Premier Shigeru Yoshida, Hitoshi Ashida, Count Ayske Kabayama, Admiral Nomura, Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu, former Consul General to New York Kensuke Horinouchi, such outstanding journalists as Shingoro Takaishi, Motosaburo Takata, Chikao Honda, of the Mainichi (Tokyo), and a host of other highly-placed men in Japanese journalism and public life, all personal and long-time friends of the writer, will, I am sure, be glad to furnish you with the record.

It is our conviction that to the American newspaper reader, the term "Jap" is not a term either of disrespect or ill-will. It no more implies disrespect for a Japanese than does the term "Yank" imply disrespect for an American citizen. In our opinion, it will never do so, unless and until agitation and propaganda give to the term a meaning and significance it does not now have. As of today, I am sure that as in the case of the word "Yank," "Gob," "Leatherneck," or "Canuck," the term is one of familiarity and camaraderie.

In the case of the complaint in question, I am sorry to say that I cannot share your views. Despite my conviction
that

that it will serve no good purpose of the interests you are presumably seeking to further -- Japanese-American good-will -- we are quite willing to make it a part of our editorial style to spell out the word "Japanese" whenever it appears in text.

We are unwilling, however, to reduce the proposition to an absurdity by prohibiting the use of the word "Jap" in a headline, under any and all conditions, though we are entirely willing to spell the word out in full, even in the headlines, when conditions make this practical.

In closing, may I repeat that it is my sincere hope that upon re-examination of the facts, you may come to realize what I sincerely believe, namely, that, if continued, your propaganda campaign, as outlined in the correspondence now before me, will in the end serve to create friction and misunderstanding where none now exists.

Very sincerely yours,

Roy W. Howard

The following reply to Mr. Howard was drafted by Ina Sugihara.

NEW YORK CHAPTER
JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

December 8, 1952

Mr. Roy W. Howard
Scripps-Howard Newspapers
230 Park Avenue
New York 17, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Howard:

Thank you for your letter of November 15 in response to our request of November 7.

In your letter you state that "no offense is intended" and "no evil purpose...will be served" by your use of the term "Jap" in your newspaper. On behalf of 10,000 members of 80 Chapters in the Japanese American Citizens League in 32 states, we would like to state that the vast majority of Americans of Japanese descent in this country, and the Japanese people in Japan, do object to the word "Jap" as a derogatory and contemptuous epithet. We do not seek a person's friendship by calling him a name which he considers objectionable.

The nicknames which you mentioned - "Yank," "Gob," "Leatherneck" - are, to our minds, not analogous with the word "Jap." These are terms that have a sympathetic meaning. The word "Jap," however, is definitely offensive and is more

comparable with words like "Chink," "Wop," "Dago," and "Kike" which have been removed from newspaper usage.

We appreciate your statement that you would be willing to have the word "Japanese" spelled out in the texts of your stories, and will look forward to seeing the policy put into effect as we read your paper.

Insofar as headlines are concerned, your opinion that prohibiting the use of the word "Jap" in headlines would "reduce the proposition to an absurdity" is not shared by any other newspaper editor who has been approached on this problem. The New York Times and Herald Tribune have long avoided using this word; the Wall Street Journal, the Journal of Commerce, and Editor & Publisher have all agreed to stop using the term.

We strongly urge you to adopt a similar policy and make it a part of your editorial rules to avoid this derogatory term, not only in your news stories, but also in headlines, editorials, columns and all other matter appearing in your newspaper. This would certainly help to promote the friendship which we know you hold toward the Japanese and Americans of Japanese ancestry.

Sincerely yours,

Woodrow W. Asai
President

The following letter was sent in order to emphasize certain points and to cover other points not included in the letter of December 8, 1952, signed by Mr. Asai.

December 11, 1952

Mr. Roy W. Howard
Scripps-Howard Newspapers
230 Park Avenue
New York 17, New York

Dear Mr. Howard:

A copy of your letter of November 15th to Mr. Asai has been sent to me by the officers of the New York Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. Although Mr. Asai has by now undoubtedly sent you his reply, I am taking the liberty of calling to your attention a few points which he might not have mentioned and which may help us to arrive at a mutually satisfactory solution of the problem.

Please be assured that your efforts in the interest of Japanese-American friendship as reflected in the editorial

columns of your newspapers are well known and appreciated by practically all persons of Japanese descent in America. Your willingness to avoid the use of the term "Jap" in newspaper text and to reduce its use in headlines, despite your belief that the term is inoffensive, is further evidence of your good-will and friendship for the people of the Japanese race.

Fortunately, our difference in convictions concerning the use of the term "Jap" appears to lie in our interpretations of a matter of fact. In all honesty, I wish that your opinion of that term were correct. Unfortunately, the term has been given a meaning of derision and contempt by its frequent use in the vicious agitation and propaganda formerly conducted against Japanese residents of the Pacific Coast states by certain newspapers and other interests over several decades. The term was also used by many Americans during and prior to World War II as a term of hatred and loathing of all things Japanese. To my knowledge, you are the first person who ever claimed that the term "Jap" "is one of familiarity and camaraderie."

I am sure that the primary reason why similar terms, such as "Nigger", "Wop", "Kike", and "Chink", are not used is because they are highly offensive to the persons and groups to whom they are applied. These words are not used because the victims of the epithets resent them and not because "the American newspaper reader" does. There is no valid reason why the Japanese alone should continue to be singled out for this kind of humiliation and insult. When the closest kind of understanding and cooperation between Americans and the Japanese is necessary in the present struggle against Communism, it would appear to be essential that sources of friction be eliminated wherever possible.

Other than the Nisei, perhaps the Americans most familiar with the feelings of the Japanese are the Christian ministers and missionaries who have worked among them. No priest or minister, at all experienced in teaching the Gospel of Christ among the Japanese, would risk degrading his calling and offending the Japanese by referring to them as "Japs". As one expression of this attitude, a photostat of a letter by The Reverend Mr. McKee which appeared in the New York Times in February 1942 is enclosed.

Both the New York Times and the New York Herald-Tribune have, as a matter of policy, avoided the use of the term "Jap" before, during, and after World War II. It should be apparent that neither I nor the Japanese American Citizens League had anything to do with influencing these papers with our "propaganda", and that both newspapers must have valid reasons for refraining from the use of that term. The editors of these papers would undoubtedly be surprised if they were to be told that their not using the term "Jap" in their headlines was "an absurdity".

I am aware, however, that in tabloid newspapers the saving of space is a more important consideration than in others. If "conditions" do not make "practical" the spelling out of "Japanese" in full in all headlines, the shortened form using the first three letters should always be clearly indicated as an abbreviation by a period at the end. The abbreviation "Jpn.", which was recently adopted by the United Nations as its official abbreviation for Japan or Japanese, is completely inoffensive and acceptable.

Very sincerely yours,

Shosuke Sasaki.

The following is the text of the letter by The Rev. Elmore M. McKee which appeared in the New York Times in February 1942 and which was enclosed with the preceding letter in the form of a photostat of a newspaper clipping.

WOULD BAN "JAP"

To the Editor of The New York Times:

Let us ban the word "Jap" in referring to the Japanese people. It is becoming the vogue to say "Jap" for Japanese on the air and sometimes in print, though happily I have not seen the term used in The Times. This abbreviation is, in my judgment, highly to be deplored.

We claim to be fighting for civilization, but such terms reveal none of that gracious respect for personality and for every nation and race which is the mark of civilization. We have been getting rid of similar titles for Chinese, Mexicans, Greeks and Germans. We must keep sane regarding all Orientals, too, and we prefer that other nations should have no similar abbreviations for Americans.

The root causes of war are psychological. They are stronger than economic or political causes. Feeding our sense of superiority toward oriental peoples is a good way to lose the next peace as we did the last one.

(The Rev.) Elmore M. McKee,
Rector, St. George's Church.

New York, Feb. 6, 1942.

No further letters were received from the management of the NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM AND THE SUN. Starting late in December, 1952, however, the newspaper stopped using the word "Jap" in the text of its articles and sharply curtailed its use in headings. Even this use gradually became less and less frequent and after a year or two was completely eliminated. Today, the NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM AND THE SUN continues to be 100% free from the use of any racially derogatory epithet.

CONCLUSION

Lest some J.A.C.L. members get the impression that all newspaper executives are as difficult to convince as those of the WORLD-TELEGRAM, the following letter is included here. The letter by Shosuke Sasaki to the JOURNAL OF COMMERCE is omitted because the arguments in his letter are well illustrated in his other letters contained in this brochure.

THE JOURNAL OF COMMERCE
New York

June 24, 1952

Mr. Shosuke Sasaki
150 West 104th St.
New York 25, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Sasaki:

As you must know from your acquaintanceship with American journalism, some queer surgery is performed on good names in the art and science of writing a compact, meaningful head for a news story. And, while certainly ignorance is no defense, I hasten to assure you that no offense was meant in the use of the word "Jap" in our story heads -- it merely was conformity with what, from your viewpoint, is the unfortunate practice of news copy desks to seek out and use the most compact descriptive term.

Because we feel that your request is not only proper and reasonable, but in our own interests of accurate reporting in good taste, I have this day requested our staff to cease using the offensive term.

I wish to thank you personally and on behalf of our staff for your kind and informative letter.

Sincerely yours,

M. L. Van Slyck
Managing Editor

The work of eliminating the newspaper use of "Jap" should be much easier today than it was in 1952. For our purpose, the definitions in the new dictionaries are weapons which no intelligent editor can easily brush aside. Had such definitions been available in 1952, the series of letters exchanged with stubborn newspaper editors would in all probability have been unnecessary.

APPENDIX

The following two letters are included to show how a stockholder took advantage of his position as part owner of a corporation to eliminate its use of the word "Jap".

September 22, 1952

Mr. Spyros P. Skouras, President
Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation
444 West 56th Street
New York 19, New York

Dear Mr. Skouras:

As a stockholder of your corporation, I am calling your attention to the urgent need for stopping the use of the term "Jap" by Movietone News when referring to the Japanese. It recently was used by Movietone News in speaking of Japanese swimmers.

The term "Jap" is resented by the Japanese as an epithet of derision and as the exact equivalent of such words as "Kike", "Wop", and "Chink". It is not an accepted abbreviation. It has never been used by the New York Times and the New York Herald-Tribune, and its use has been discontinued by such New York newspapers as the Daily News, Mirror, Journal-American, Wall Street Journal, and the Journal of Commerce. The objectionable nature of that term has been recognized in official resolutions passed this year by both the American Newspaper Guild and the Newspaper Guild of New York.

The use of the term "Jap" is regarded by many Japanese as evidence of the callous insincerity of American declarations of the virtues of democracy. Its continued use will help the Communists to incite bigger and more serious anti-American riots in Japan and will hinder American efforts to build an Asiatic defense against Communism.

From a strictly business standpoint, the use of the term "Jap" by our corporation in its productions can not do other than harm its earning power. It certainly will not enhance the company's prestige among the Japanese and in the long run is sure to result in lower net earnings than would otherwise have been possible.

I ask that immediate steps be taken to stop Movietone News from using that contemptuous term and to make certain that the term be avoided hereafter by Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation as carefully as the equivalent terms for the Jewish, Chinese, and Italian peoples are avoided today.

Very truly yours,

Shosuke Sasaki.

TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX FILM CORPORATION

New York 19, N. Y.

September 23, 1952

Mr. Shosuke Sasaki
150 West 104th Street
New York 25, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Sasaki:

I am glad to receive a letter from a stockholder which makes an intelligent point about the conduct of our business and I am grateful to you for your communication of September 22nd.

Of course, I agree with you that the term "Jap" should not be used by Movietone News or any part of our operations any more than the other words you mention.

In this instance, I honestly feel that our people in Movietone News did not willfully or deliberately use the term in any derogatory sense or in a derisive way but simply as a shortening of the word Japanese. They did not intend to give it the same connotation that the other words you mention have with regard to other groups of people but, as you say, it is not an accepted abbreviation and I have requested our people in all departments hereafter to abstain from using the shortened term.

I do hope that you will assure your friends that as long as I am head of this Corporation no carelessness in dealing with any group of people will be tolerated. Your point regarding the fight against Communism was well taken.

Both as an individual and as President of your Company, I have always tried to do as much as possible to help promote brotherhood in the world and as a matter of fact in order to bring about a deeper understanding of this problem and a better spirit of inter-racial and inter-religious tolerance I accepted the Chairmanship of the Extension Committee of the World Brotherhood movement some time ago. This movement was inaugurated by the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

I am shortly starting on a business trip that will take me to the Far East, including Japan, as well as Australia and New Zealand, and while there I intend to make every effort to participate as actively as possible in spreading the World Brotherhood movement.

Once again let me express my sincere thanks to you for your letter and to reiterate my assurances that the utmost care will be used in all departments to avoid the use of the abbreviated term of the word Japanese.

With kindest regards, I remain,

Sincerely,

S. P. Skouras