Women assembly workers rivet a gusset to a wing rib at the Long Beach plant of the Douglas Aircraft Company in October 1943. (*Courtesy of* The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter, *Clarity Productions documentary. Contact: ConField@aol.com.*)

The wartime expansion of aircraft manufacturing compressed 40 years of normal industrial progress into 40 months. In 1933 all the airframe factories in southern California together employed only about 1000 people. In November 1943 they employed 280,300.

As in the shipyards, the airframe plants actively recruited women to fill jobs previously held by men. Women made up over 40 percent of the workforce of the aircraft industry in southern California and thus made a major contribution to the war effort. The new employment opportunities also had a significant impact on the attitudes of the women workers. One female airframe worker later recalled, "All my life, I sorta had an inferiority complex and that was gone—completely—'cause I found out I could do a lot of things that I didn't know I could do."

Aircraft accounted for nearly 60 percent of the money that the federal government spent under prime contracts for goods manufactured in California during World War II, but the profits of the aircraft companies were small. The great bulk of the expansion was accomplished with federal funds, through contracts under which the government guaranteed the entire cost and the companies received only a fixed fee in addition.

Four of the country's leading aircraft producers, Douglas, Lockheed, North American, and Northrop, had their main plants in the Los Angeles area, and two, Convair and Ryan, were in San Diego. Because clear, mild, and consistent weather offered great advantages for the production and testing of aircraft, climate became one of the principal factors in the location of airframe plants, and southern California therefore received a large share of the industry's wartime expansion. That share would have been even larger had it not been for the memory of Pearl Harbor and the fear that

Japanese carrier-based bombers might attack the Pacific coast. The gigantic Douglas factory of Santa Monica was hidden under a camouflage cover, with dummy houses, streets, and trees, so that from the air and even from the ground it was almost impossible to distinguish the plant from its suburban residential surroundings.

The Relocation of Japanese Americans

The elaborate and expensive camouflaging of southern California aircraft factories, though it proved unnecessary, did no great harm, but the fear of Japanese attack also led the government of the United States into a massive, tragic, and needless blunder. This was the evacuation from the west coast of all persons of Japanese ancestry and the imprisonment of most of them, citizens and aliens alike, without trial, behind barbed wire, under armed guard, in so-called relocation camps in desert areas in the interior.

The attack on Pearl Harbor and false rumors of sabotage and other treasonable acts by Japanese Americans reactivated all the stereotyped racist delusions that had long formed the beliefs of many Californians about the Japanese. Since the early years of the century a number of the state's most influential newspapers, politicians, and organizations had frequently portrayed all persons of Japanese extraction as sly, sinister, ruthless, and incapable of loyalty to any country but Japan.

For the more effective dissemination of such ideas, Valentine S. McClatchy, publisher of the *Sacramento Bee,* had formed the California Joint Immigration Committee in 1921. This body coordinated the propaganda activities of four existing anti-Japanese organizations. Among its members were the secretary-treasurer of the state Federation of Labor, the master of the state Grange, the grand president of the Native Sons of the Golden West, the deputy adjutant of the California Department of the American Legion, and the attorney general of California. Attorney General Ulysses S. Webb, one of the principal authors of the state's alien land law, often asserted in public speeches that persons of Japanese origin had inherent racial traits that rendered them unassimilable and untrustworthy as Americans. Earl Warren, when he succeeded Webb as attorney general of California in 1939, held similar views.

Immediately after the raid on Pearl Harbor, false rumors of treacherous acts by Japanese Americans in Hawaii began to circulate both in the islands and on the mainland. Rumormongers claimed to know on the best authority that Japanese vegetable trucks had blocked roads, or that one truck had rushed across Hickham Field and knocked the tails off a line of fighter planes, or that a huge arrow cut in a field of sugarcane the night before the raid had guided the Japanese bombers to this or that important target.

For the first several weeks after the Pearl Harbor raid, the gradually increasing demands for some sort of mass action against the Japanese Americans on the west coast received little support from Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command. On December 26, DeWitt telephoned from his headquarters at the San Francisco Presidio to the provost marshal general in Washington,