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Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers

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news from

Senator DANIEL K. INOUE

topic: Speech to 6th annual U. S. Travel Conference of Discover America Travel Organizations at the Sheraton-Waikiki

date:

release date: 9:00 p.m., May 11, 1974

As is so often the case in the history of nations, it often takes a crisis or a threat of disaster before action, long overdue, is taken to preserve a natural resource or to realize a national potential.

If ever there was a natural resource or a national potential that has been neglected, overlooked, and otherwise ignored, it is tourism.

And so, when our nation faced an energy crisis, none of us here should have been surprised that the energy needs of an industry which generates \$61 billion in expenditures annually, and is our second largest in retail expenditures, were considered as being of a low priority. Tourism was officially described as "non-essential".

Nor should anyone here be surprised that during the four-month period, November 15, 1973, to March 15, 1974--because the energy crisis caused a reduction in the number of automobile tourists--an estimated \$716,800,000 in tourism expenditures was not realized, 179,000 jobs were placed in jeopardy, and 90,000 people were dropped from payrolls.

I might add, these figures do not include losses of employment in air transport and other inter-city passenger services segments of the industry.

Your own organization has estimated that had the Sunday ban on gasoline continued, had the actual shortages due to reduced allocation of fuel for automobile use continued, and had the fear and uncertainty concerning the availability of fuel and services along the highways continued, a loss of expenditures by tourists in excess of \$2.8 billion would have occurred, and the employment of 716,000 people would have been affected.

A little more than a month ago, therefore, my Subcommittee held extensive hearings on a Resolution (S. Res. 281) intended to emphasize the importance of tourism to our nation's economy and to the quality of our life, and the consequent necessity that the industry receive an adequate supply of energy.

Fifty Senators co-sponsored that Resolution, and more than forty witnesses testified at the Committee hearings on it.

The Resolution was reported by the Commerce Committee, and has been adopted by the Senate.

More recently, representatives of the industry appeared before my Subcommittee as we considered S. 2536, legislation which would have Congress establish a national policy on tourism and create a National Tourism Administration to implement it.

Following the testimony of government witnesses during hearings on S. Res. 281, I felt cautiously optimistic that, as a government, we were beginning to appreciate the national significance and importance of the industry.

I was, therefore, very much disappointed in the position taken by the agencies and departments of government on S. 2536.

In voicing opposition to the creation of the National Tourism Administration, representatives of the Departments of Commerce and Interior and the White House recommended, as an alternative, the creation of an Inter-agency Coordinating Committee made up of representatives from 19 different departments. I have been in Washington, D. C., for nearly 15 years, and during those years, I have seen Inter-agency Committees come and go. At the present time, we have literally hundreds in existence, and many are non-functioning. I would have been less disappointed if the Administration had simply opposed the creation of the National Tourism Administration and instead, had suggested beefing up the present United States Travel Service.

In essence, their position was "business as usual" as far as government support of tourism. Among other things, of course, this means a mere \$11.5 million for the United States Travel Service to promote the USA abroad, and no money for domestic promotion.

However, as I said at the conclusion of those hearings, I do not discourage easily. I have directed the Committee staff to work with representatives of DATO in an attempt to develop a government policy on tourism which has more imagination than "business as usual".

I have dwelled on history a little longer than usual because the government's policy of "business as usual" is partially responsible for another crisis which confronts the industry and our nation. We must act expeditiously if we are to avoid it.

Most objective observers would, I think, agree that our national efforts to organize and create an exciting, memorable Bicentennial have not generated sufficient enthusiasm.

The American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, the agency created to implement the basic plan for a nationwide Bicentennial, has been replaced by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration.

With less than two years remaining before our 200th birthday, the Bicentennial Administration has yet to solve on a nationwide basis such problems as the handling of large numbers of visitors, travel facilities, accommodations, and the special problems of foreign visitors involving language barriers.

And, of course, the uncertainty of the energy situation further exacerbates matters.

This is the situation at the national level. Many authorities say we have already exhausted the lead time necessary to solve these problems.

At the grass-roots level--State and community--progress is uneven.

One of the major themes for our national celebration is "Heritage '76". This theme is intended to focus on the panorama of our nation's history as it has unfolded over the past two hundred years.

Developed properly, it is an excellent way, in my judgment, to explain what America is, and who Americans are.

Such explanation, I might add, would not solely be for the benefit of our foreign visitors. Americans are a heterogenous people, with diverse ethnic and regional backgrounds.

We need to explain ourselves to one another as well.

What better way to begin than by acquainting people with our forefathers, our institutions of government, and our sites of historical significance! In a word--our history.

To be sure, our story is told well in many history books, and on television programs such as the magnificent "America" series.

Yet, who here would not agree that a trip to Philadelphia to see the Liberty Bell, or a visit to Washington to read the original Declaration of Independence, adds a dimension to the understanding of our history which cannot be conveyed by history books or television.

Unless greater effort is made to introduce and familiarize visitors--whether from abroad or fellow citizens--with the many regions and diversified cultures which make up America, our Bicentennial celebration will not fully realize its potential for explaining America and its people--Who we are, and What we are.

May I suggest a special role for DATO. As you encourage visitors and tourists to discover America during the Bicentennial, you should emphasize the things and places which will help discover the people of America.

From this standpoint, every one of our fifty States is unique. Each has something special to offer in terms of its heritage.

Especially for our Bicentennial celebration Florida should mean more than Miami Beach; California more than Disneyland; and Nevada more than Las Vegas.

At the Subcommittee's most recent hearings two weeks ago, the director of the United States Travel Service informed me that no funds had been allocated to USTS for the promotion of domestic tourism.

Because I am firmly committed to what I am asking of you, I requested him to meet with DATO and develop a program and budget for a domestic tourism program for the USTS. When this is done--and hopefully, it will be done soon--I said I would introduce the necessary legislation to authorize the appropriation of funds for the program.

All of us here appreciate that we are once again forced to make a belated start if we are to succeed in our Bicentennial effort.

But as I said at the outset, so often a threat of disaster is necessary before we take appropriate action to realize a national potential.

Again, I wish to thank the membership of DATO for honoring me this evening. As a government, I believe we are on the threshold of fully understanding the importance of tourism. I believe that we will begin to act accordingly.

If so, success will in large measure be due to dedicated men and women such as yourselves. Insofar as it is in my power to do so, I assure you that your diligence and unceasing efforts will not have been wasted. Please continue your good work.