

Speeches and messages: 1977-1979: Aloha United Way Annual Meeting

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers

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news from

Senator DANIEL K. INOUE

topic:

ALOHA UNITED WAY ANNUAL MEETING

date:

FEBRUARY 15, 1977

release date:

FEBRUARY 15, 1977, 9:00 PM

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is both a pleasure and an honor to be asked to join you this evening. Let me explain that a little. The work that the United Way is embarked upon here in Hawaii is not only an example of selfless contributions of time and money, but is more importantly a part of our American way of life.

There are many differences between our way of life, what we call Democracy, and life in the Soviet Union.

Some say that the principal difference between our way and that of the Communists is that we have free and open elections to choose or reject our leaders. However, technically speaking, the Communist leaders are elected also -- even if they may have little or no opposition.

Some say that the principal difference is that in the United States we are constitutionally endowed with certain rights and liberties, freedom of speech, the right to assembly, the right to petition our government, etc.

The Communists might argue that they have these same rights but only to a lesser degree and provided they are not exercised in a manner disruptive of the society or the state. They would go even further, however, and cite many examples where our government and society may have infringed on our supposedly inviolate rights. One has only to think back on the witch-hunts of the McCarthy era, the internment of our own citizens during WW II, or the illegal burglaries and wire-tapping by the government which were a part of what we call "Watergate". We must admit that we have not always protected our rights perfectly or in a timely enough manner.

However, there is one very significant difference that is not usually mentioned. I believe it shows very profoundly how our societies differ. I'm speaking of the difference between how we take care of our own:

How we raise funds for charity or social services.

How we obtain manpower for volunteer activities.

How our foundations pioneer in the development of new techniques and projects for the public well-being.

In the Soviet Union the efforts in which you are involved just don't exist as you and I know them. Citizens don't band together privately for the common good. In the USSR the state quote "has taken on itself to provide all the needs of the people" unquote.

In the Soviet Union everything is official. Even the Red Cross and Crescent Society is financed, staffed and directed by the government.

The only semblance of real voluntarism or charitable works are in the trade unions. Each union local has an elected representative in charge of social services. When misfortune strikes, he visits and advises the worker or his family on how to apply to the State for whatever benefits for which they are eligible.

Contrast this with the kind of work that you have been involved in over the years:

The many hours you and your friends have voluntarily devoted to various community and national projects;

The money that your neighbors and fellow church-goers have given to support worthwhile efforts both here and overseas,

The foundations created by the Carnegies and Mellons, the Rockefellers and the Fords to name but a few. And, let me remind you that many of these were established either before we had income taxes or before World War II when our income tax rates were very low.

Ever since its founding, our government and people have welcomed private citizens involvement in charitable endeavors. Our tax laws encourage contributions to our churches, synagogues, hospitals and community betterment activities.

Our national leaders have traditionally served either as honorary or active chairmen of fund raising drives. In fact, one of our Presidents, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was practically the founder of the March of Dimes.

Too often in Congress, I hear appeals that the government should make a greater financial contribution to charitable endeavors. Let us not let that happen. Let us keep our volunteer activities in the hands of our private citizens. While it is very tempting to

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have Uncle Sam provide the money, I'm afraid of its consequences. We should set our own priorities for the charities or community activities with which we are involved. Our government should not determine our priorities.

Our government is already heavily involved in almost every facet of our lives. Before we add any more controls we should pause to think--is this really what we want? What will this step inevitably lead to?

Your charitable work, your human services programs--this is one area independent of the government that gives every American an opportunity to be an individual:

A chance to contribute without coercion,

A chance to express personal concern for the needy and the less fortunate.

I commend you for giving up your time and money to help others whom you may never meet, people who may never have an opportunity to stand up before you and say "thank you".

On their behalf and on behalf of a grateful State and Nation, I say thank you. Thank you for making your contribution with that extra bit of warmth and compassion that sets our people apart from all others. It is for these reasons that I find it both a pleasure and an honor to have been asked to address you--you who are doing so much for so many.

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