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**SPEECH BY DANIEL K. INOUE
NIPPON CLUB
JAPANESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK
JULY 29, 2002**

The political, economic and strategic relations that presently exist between Japan and the United States can be described as good, amicable and in our mutual best interests. However, the reality of our times suggest to me that conditions are always subject to change and I ask for your consideration the following factors.

First, all major nations have today one thing in common. They are either ethnically homogeneous, or maintain a diverse ethnic population with a significant majority group. The United States is in the latter category. However, the census statistics in the United States will change in about 30 years. Census and demographic experts predict that in about 30 years, the United States will no longer have a majority ethnic group. At this moment, the majority ethnic group is of European ancestry. Most share a common religion and similar cultures. America today is much more focused on Europe and European relations than they are to Asia and Asian relations. It is true that there are certain noticeable changes in the strategic areas. If one should study the ethnic makeup of the Congress of the United States, what I just described should be easily understood.

Although our relations this day may be considered good, it should never be forgotten that throughout the history of my country, the most hated enemy we have faced has been the people of Japan. Even to this day, we commemorate, we remember and we debate the atrocities of World War II. Last year, the Congress of the United States was prepared to amend the Treaty of Peace between the Japan and the United States on the eve of the 50th anniversary of its signing in San Francisco. I will discuss this matter at another juncture in my remarks.

Second factor of our good relations is the recognized robustness of the Japanese economy. It is true that Japan is experiencing difficult

economic times, but most experts predict that once Japanese get corporations accustomed to globalization and business partnerships with global corporations, the economy will stabilize and begin to get strong and robust. Like most major nations, America has admired and respected Japan's military, the political, and economic strength. In our relations with other nations, there is a definite correlation between our perception of a nation's strength, militarily, economically and politically and our relationship with that nation. If our perception is that there is weakness in any one of the three areas, history has shown that our respect and our concern will noticeably be diminished.

Today, Japan is one of the super economic powers of this planet. Although experts predict that you will overcome the present crisis, there are some who suggest otherwise and if that should occur, you may begin to see a deterioration in our relations. Therefore, it is in the best interest of American and Japan that Japan maintains its present political, economic and military strength. It is true that Japan has a minimal military force, described by your country as being a self-defense force. But the other nations in Asia, including some in Europe, are convinced that if circumstances change, Japan has the potential of once again becoming a major military power.

If one should agree with my observations, then the logical question that will follow should be, what can we do to assure the continuous maintenance of good and amicable relations that will serve our mutual national interests. I wish to suggest two developments.

First, less than two decades ago, three Members of the United States House of Representatives were of Japanese ancestry, and four Members of the United States Senate were of Japanese ancestry. Today there are three in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate.

I will be 78 years old in a few months. Although my health is good, many suggest that I am now approaching the autumn years of my political life. From what I have seen and heard about the Congress of the United States during the past 43 years, suggest to me that as long as we have active members of Japanese ancestry who are knowledgeable and sufficiently concerned of their Japanese ancestry, the internal attitude of the Congress relating to Japan will be good and less volatile. As a matter of political courtesy, Members of Congress do not say harsh

and negative things about Irish people in the presence of a Member of Irish ancestry, or Members of the Jewish faith, and the same will apply to those of Japanese ancestry. For example, I have never heard Members of Congress ever refer to the Japanese as "Japs" in my presence, but I feel certain in private conversations with others, that hated word may be uttered. Therefore, that reality is present in important debates, conferences and meetings and impacts on our relationship. Those of us who hope for the continuation of our good relations between our two nations, are trying our best to encourage young leaders of Japanese ancestry to consider political lives in Washington. Admittedly, we have not been too successful, but we are trying. However, this should not be of your concern or involvement. It would be highly inappropriate for your nation or your business community to be involved in the politics of my nation.

The second development is one in which there is great potential for improvement and success. Today there are hundreds of so-called Japanese organizations in the United States. Each state has at least one Japanese Chamber of Commerce. In my State of Hawaii, there are ten Japanese Chambers of Commerce. Each island has a senior and junior Chamber of Commerce, in addition every island has numerous prefectural organizations. There are art organizations, cultural organizations and the list goes on and on. There are national organizations. However, if one conducts a survey and a study of these hundreds of organizations, one would find that the agenda and the mission and the scope of interest of these organizations may be very narrow and as such, may be limited in influence nationally. Although what I am about to suggest may be self-serving, I wish to suggest that there is one organization in the United States that can be described as the following. It has the largest dues paying membership, much larger than any other Japanese organization in America. It includes the rich, the poor, the conservative, the liberal, the young and the old. I am speaking about the Japanese American National Museum. Although this Museum only recently observed its 10th anniversary at its present location, it has received much national recognition, respect and support. At this moment, there are over 10,000 museums in the United States, some are admittedly small. One of the largest national organization in

American is the American Museum Association. The President of the Japanese American National Museum was elected to serve as Vice President of the American Museum Association and served in that capacity for several years. Last year, she was asked to serve as Chairman. She declined that because of her dedication to the JANM Los Angeles. This museum was recently highly commended and praised by civic organizations and the government for being the first national organization to respond to the terrorist attack of September 11, by convening a meeting of leaders of the Muslim community who were assured that the members of the Japanese community who senses their anxiety during this difficult time. After all, you may be aware that during World War II, Japanese American citizens and Japanese nationals were considered enemy aliens, and 120,000 were placed in concentration camps, not because they committed any crimes, but because they were Japanese. Because of this experience, we felt some concern that Americans may forget the past and repeat its errors of the 40s.

As a result of the JANM community outreach programs, I was made aware of a matter that was being discussed in certain communities of the United States, such as the Chinese and Korean communities, supporting legislation to force Japanese companies for POW atrocities that were committed during World War II. This action if permitted to become a reality, would have been in contravention of the Treaty of Peace .

However, as some of you are aware, this measure was introduced in both Houses of the United States Congress and identical measures were passed in both Houses. It was offered as an amendment to a major appropriation bill. Under the rules of the Congress, if an amendment to a bill is passed in identical shape in both Houses, that amendment is not an item of conference. In other words, it is considered adopted and passed. That was the situation that we found ourselves in. However, as some of you may know, I prevailed upon my colleagues to override the rules to delete the amendment from the bill. This particular type of action is taken only when an important national interest is involved. I insisted to my colleagues that our national interest was imperiled by this amendment. The record will show that no other Member of Congress

was interested enough to bring this matter to the attention of the conferees. Although no person is indispensable, I must suggest that the passage of this measure would have become a reality if there were no Members interested or concerned about the Japan-United States relationship. Those who advocated this action, have not given up. There are now looking for other avenues to follow.

I respectfully suggest that the leaders of the JANM, because of its involvement and influence in many communities, was to some degree responsible in keeping this matter at a very low profile. There was hardly a mention of this important matter in our national press, nor did we hear harsh outcries of condemnation or concern by American veterans organizations that supported this amendment. I respectfully suggest that the leaders of the Museum played some role of this outcome. I am therefore suggesting that if we are desirous in continuing the maintenance of good relations, then this goal will be best served by supporting and maintaining an organization in the United States that would understand the nature and implications of the relationship and would be prepared to do something about it.

I am not suggesting that the Museum serve as a puppet of Japan or as a voice. I suggest that JANM would make it possible for free and honest discussion of problems and an honest resolution of such. The leaders of JANM are presently working with representatives of your government to establish an organization of leaders of your nation and Nikkei leaders of my country. These discussions have been ongoing for several months.

Finally, you may be asking why I am interested in good and amicable relations between Japan and the United States. The answer is very simple. When the relationship is good, my personal life is much more pleasant. When the relationship is bad, my life can be hellish as I experienced in the 40s. I do not wish to go through that experience again, and I am certain I speak for all Nikkei.

Although we may be far away and may not be able to speak the language of our ancestors, we are still aware of certain virtues, such as *on*, *chugi*, *meiyo*, *giri*. We wish to honor the memories of our ancestors. For those of you who may not be aware, the Regiment in which I served was made up of Japanese American volunteers. At the end of the war,

we were designated as the most decorated unit in the history of the United States Army. Among the Nikkei, 21 received the highest medal for valor, the Medal of Honor. It would be considered outstanding if any regiment to receive three.

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