

Speeches and messages: 1974 (2 of 2): Speech in defense of tourism

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers

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news from

TOURISM

Senator DANIEL K. INOUE

topic: Speech in defense of tourism to the Hawaii Chapter of
National Secretaries Association, Likelike Room,
Princess Kaiulani Hotel

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A month ago, at the request of some of the business community of Hawaii, I agreed to participate in a 40 second television spot commercial paying tribute to the important role of tourism as a contributor to our State's economy. My message was repeated in newspaper advertisement form.

I stated in that message that "As a United States Senator I've traveled extensively throughout our country. I've visited auto plants in Michigan, steel mills in Pennsylvania--petrochemical plants in Texas."

"And I realize how fortunate we are in Hawaii. Our major industry is different. It doesn't insult the landscape with smokestacks. It doesn't subject its workers to long, monotonous assembly lines. It doesn't pollute our waters with industrial chemical wastes."

"It's an industry that takes up less than one fifth of one percent of Hawaii's land...yet it provides good jobs for more than 40,000 of our people."

"I'm talking of course, about Hawaii's visitor industry. Its growth is one of the best things that's happened to Hawaii since statehood. It has helped make possible the standard of living and opportunity that we all enjoy today."

I was aware before taping that message that there were some in Hawaii who question the importance and value of this industry to the welfare of the people of Hawaii. However, I did not anticipate the level or the vehemence of the opposition it aroused as expressed in some of the letters which I received. Some were filled with "expletive deleted"; a few were threatening.

I would like to share with you in somewhat greater depth today additional reasons to those already cited for my support for this industry.

As some of you may know, I am not only Senator from Hawaii--a state where tourism is our most important product--I am also Chairman of the Foreign Commerce and Tourism Subcommittee of the United States Senate Commerce Committee. In that capacity, I have become well aware of the importance of tourism to our national economy and to our balance of payments as well. The biggest single deficit in our foreign trade account is the imbalance in our tourism account, with the billions of dollars spent abroad by American's, unmatched by tourists to our shores. In 1973, the tourist dollar deficit was approximately \$6.9 billion. I have also grown to appreciate the high regard that other nation's--some far more crowded than our State of Hawaii--place on encouraging tourism as the one economic activity which brings in more, while taking less, from their limited and irreplaceable resources than any other.

This is why the government of Ireland, a tiny nation of 3 million people with a population density almost the same as that of our State, spends more money on tourist promotion than the government of the United States does for all its tourist promotion. This is why the Netherlands, with a density of population more than seven times ours, not only welcomes, but very actively seeks, to promote tourism.

The 40,000 jobs in the tourist industry is only part of the story of the importance of this industry to Hawaii. These 40,000 do not include the many ancillary jobs which provide economic opportunity and security for the people of our State and which would be non-existent without a healthy tourist industry.

Last year tourism increased somewhat over 15 percent. The increase in East-bound tourism was just over twenty percent. That 400,000 additional tourists meant jobs and income.

Recent studies by our State Department of Economic Development show that for every 100,000 additional visitors we have \$40,000,000 more in direct expenditures. Each 100,000 tourists provides 4,333 jobs directly and another 1,600 jobs in ancillary employment.

It is true that many of these jobs are not the greatest jobs in the world. Maids, waiters, busboys, tour guides, and bell hops will not top the list of vocational choices to which our young people aspire. Neither does picking pineapple or coffee or working in the cane fields, however. And neither does working on an assembly line in Detroit or in a coal mine in West Virginia or in the wheat fields of Kansas or the hog pens of Iowa. All have one thing in common--they can be boring, tedious, sometimes dirty and difficult ways to make a living.

But working in the tourist industry and thereby providing enjoyment for those who seek a change from their normal, somewhat humdrum, existence, is an important and worthy endeavor. As secretaries, your work is not always exciting, fascinating, or easy either. Each of us needs an opportunity to get away from our normal every day jobs--to enjoy a few weeks of relaxation in a new environment, to regenerate our spirit and maintain our good mental balance. Without a tourist industry that is not possible. The tourist worker may be just as essential to the quality of our lives as the nurse or psychiatrist. Helping to provide for the pleasure and comfort of others is neither degrading nor unimportant.

We in Hawaii have been blessed as few people on this earth. We have a most pleasant and congenial climate. We have beautiful scenery, beaches and a warm and friendly people. Others seek to brighten their lives by sharing for a few days or weeks that which is ours. In so doing they also contribute to enriching our lives.

Last year for the first time tourism, not defense, was the largest single source of income to the people of Hawaii. Income from tourism was more than twice the income from sugar and pineapple combined.

For every dollar spent by tourists in our State some 19 to 23 cents came into the state and local governments in the form of taxes. Our taxes in Hawaii are high, as is the demand for State and local government services. Estimates of outside academic experts show that some \$2.80 is received in tax revenues from tourism for every dollar spent on them by our State and local governments. The message is clear. Without tourists our taxes would be much higher.

I am not unmindful of the overcrowding of Waikiki. I can appreciate the desire for open space and a return to a simpler, less demanding existence. I too am offended on occasion by strangers who congest our streets and highways, our beaches and parks. I can become irritated by being forced to wait in a long line to be served at my favorite restaurant. But I am reminded that without tourism many of those favorite restaurants would not exist.

Many years ago, I urged a moratorium on construction in Waikiki. It fell on deaf ears, I have worked effectively to prevent real estate developers from taking control of Fort DeRussy. I strongly favor not only open space but decentralization and efforts to encourage tourists to increasingly seek the enjoyments to be found on the Neighbor Islands. With average occupancy rates in Waikiki running twenty percent higher than on the Big Island and five to seven percent higher than on Maui or Kauai, the problem remains a difficult and vexing one to solve, however.

I too want a utopian Hawaii for myself and for my wife and our son to enjoy. I recognize that it won't just happen by wishing--but it certainly won't come to pass by putting a pox on all our visitors.

Food, shelter and clothing require money and to earn money one must engage in useful work for which there is a demand.

I support efforts to expand our economic base--to provide a greater choice of economic opportunities and alternatives for our people. We need to develop an increased utilization of our vast ocean resources through our efforts in oceanography. Think tanks, a new Center for Tropical Agricultural Research, making Hawaii a trade center for the Pacific, light and labor intensive manufacturing--these and more, shall continue to receive my encouragement and support. They are, however, in the future, as sources of employment in meaningful numbers and as an alternative to our heavy reliance on tourism as our State's number one economic activity.

I do not apologize for my encouragement of tourism.

I appreciate this opportunity to further document the reasons for my support. I pledge my efforts toward trying my very best to make Hawaii not only a great place to visit but the very best place to live.