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THE WHITE HOUSE

A TOAST BY THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE DIET RECEPTION

HOTEL OKURA

4:27 P.M. JAPAN TIME

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply grateful for the very kind remarks and the toast given to me and to my country. It is very significant that I have an opportunity of joining with the members of your Diet.

I am sure all of you have recognized that I spent a quarter of a century of my political life as a member of our legislative body, the House of Representatives--or your Parliament.

This was a great experience for me. I think it is quite significant in addition that the first American President who visited your great country was an individual who had spent some time in the Parliament or the Legislature, the House of Representatives, and the United States Senate, as Vice President.

This, in my judgment, gives a President a broader perspective of the problems; of the solutions. It has always been my feeling that a person who has served in a Parliament or in a legislative body is extremely well qualified to understand the views of the people of a country, a person who is well qualified to seek a consensus or a solution to the problems, whether they be at home or abroad.

One of my very top staff members, a number of years ago, Mr. Rumsfeld, initiated with members from your Parliament, an exchange between Japanese parliamentarians and legislators from our Congress. It is my judgment that this exchange is a very, very important way of building a constructive relationship between your country and our country.

I was never privileged to participate in the Japanese-American Interparliamentary Group or Exchange Group, as I understand it is called. I did have an opportunity as a Member of the House of Representatives -- our Congress -- to be a member of the Interparliamentary Union Delegation on three or four occasions. And I found this exchange between parliamentarians of great benefit, a tremendous asset, and I hope and trust that in the years ahead this exchange between members of parliamentary groups will broaden, will be more extensive -- it will be very helpful to each country, to all countries.

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Let me conclude by saying that I am honored to be among a group that I grew up with in politics in my country. I understand your problems, I understand each and every one of you. I was always in the minority in our Congress. We always were trying to challenge the majority. We had many differences, but I have found that in the differences in a parliamentary group in our country -- and I believe in yours -- that you can disagree without being disagreeable, which in my opinion is a true test of the strength and the character of a parliamentary body.

The discussions that I have had with your government have been constructive in seeking to solve problems -- domestic, international.

The great opportunity that I had to meet with your Emperor and Empress, His Majesty and Her Majesty -- it has been a great experience for me, and I thank them and the people of Japan for being so warm in their welcome. I will report to my people in the United States that they have great friends in Japan, that our governments are working together to seek solutions to the problems on a worldwide basis and between us, as two governments.

We are friends we will work together, and we have a great future -- the United States with the government of Japan. And it is therefore my privilege and honor to offer a toast to your government and to your people on behalf of my government and the American people.

END

(4:34 P.M. JAPAN TIME)