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REMARKS FOR OPENING DINNER

Pacific Rim Universities Conference

David P. Gardner, President  
University of California

San Francisco  
May 10, 1989

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Ladies and gentlemen:

It is my very great pleasure, on behalf of the University of California, to join Ambassador and Mrs. Haydn Williams and the Asia Foundation in welcoming each of you to this Pacific Rim Universities Conference. Ambassador Williams and the Asia Foundation have been active for many years in promoting better understanding and closer ties between the United States and the nations of Asia, and it is a natural extension of that interest that this conference should be held at the Asia Foundation headquarters here in San Francisco and convened under Foundation sponsorship. Let me express my deep appreciation to both for the financial support and vision that have given rise to this conference.

I think it is also altogether appropriate that we take note this evening of the impending retirement of the distinguished President of the Asia Foundation, our friend and colleague Haydn Williams. During the visit to San Francisco of President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines, at a dinner here in the city, she observed that the Asia Foundation had done as much as any other organization for the fostering and

furthering of human rights in the Philippines, and credited Haydn Williams as the driving force behind this effort. And there is a growing cadre of leaders in various Asian countries whose careers and potential for service have been aided by the work of the Asia Foundation and the scholarly and student exchanges it so effectively sponsors under Ambassador Williams's guidance.

For over a quarter of a century he has directed the work of the Asia Foundation, helped lay the groundwork for much of the Foundation's success, and through the force of his personality and skill and vision has demonstrably improved and enhanced relationships between Asia and the United States. Our understanding of Asia, and Asia's understanding of us, have enduringly benefited from the committed and competent service he has given as President of the Foundation.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in expressing our warm appreciation to Haydn Williams, who in attending this conference will be bringing to a close his many years of service to a noble cause that has touched all of our lives.

It is my privilege to serve as host for this conference, representing the University of California, which appreciates this opportunity to extend a warm welcome and to assist in

the gathering together of the conference participants and their guests.

As this audience well knows, Europe has its Conference of European Rectors; the British Commonwealth, its Association of Commonwealth Universities; the United Kingdom, its Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals; the United States, its Association of American Universities; and innumerable other, similar groups within our various countries. But to the best of our knowledge no attempt has ever been made to identify common interests and to bring together heads of public universities in the nations of the Pacific Rim, as we are trying to do with this conference. This is true despite the obvious and growing significance of the area, economically, politically, educationally, and culturally.

Each of us has at one time or another travelled throughout this region of the world, and many in this room are already acquainted with one another. But it seemed to Haydn Williams and to me that considerable advantage might be obtained from a more organized and formal sharing of our interests, concerns, and hopes. This conference is organized in ways reflective of that judgment, and we earnestly hope that its professional benefits will be as consequential as the personal friendships we are sure will emerge and flourish as

a result of these discussions.

It also seemed especially fitting, to both the Asia Foundation and the University of California, that this conference be held in San Francisco. This is a truly international city, one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse in the world.

San Francisco hosts consular offices for nearly 70 nations, including three-quarters of the countries on the Pacific Rim. More than 75 foreign banks and financial institutions maintain offices here, along with many international financial services, trading companies, law and accounting offices.

In terms of population, San Francisco and the Bay Area are truly a Pacific community. We are home to a significant and growing Hispanic population, drawn from Mexico, Central America, and South America. The proportion of Asian-Americans in the population of the nine Bay Area counties may be as high as 25 percent, according to recent estimates--more than six times what it was in 1970. By most accounts, the Asian-American population of the Bay Area now exceeds that of Kuala Lumpur and of every city in the Philippines except Manila; and demographers estimate that the Asian-American community is growing at a rate that will make it as populous

as today's Singapore by the year 2000.

In this sense San Francisco is like California itself, which has always been enriched and diversified by people from all over the world who come here to seek their fortunes and their futures. In recent years that trend has intensified, as California has welcomed roughly one-third of our country's immigration. The Southern California Gas Company, I understand, can inform customers how to hook up a gas stove in Chinese (either Mandarin or Cantonese), Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, and English.

We have in California and San Francisco, then, a microcosm of the cultures, religions, arts, values, and customs of just about every nation of the Pacific Rim. A similar ethnic diversity is reflected in the student body at UC. The University's Berkeley campus, just across the Bay from here, has no ethnic or racial majority in its freshman class. In this respect it is anticipating California's future, for all the demographic indicators are that by the turn of the century or thereabouts, California will become the first mainland state whose population consists predominantly of members of minority groups. We are a state that is striving to create a truly diverse society, one in which people of different cultures, languages, and origins can live together harmoniously and cooperatively. And, as a state, California

is seeking to respond creatively to the opportunities and responsibilities that flow from its geographic position on the Pacific Rim.

A sense of the Pacific Rim as a unique and emerging community extends far beyond California, of course. We are keenly aware of its comparable significance not only to our colleagues from the United States but to the representatives of all of the countries of the Pacific Rim, from Canada to Mexico to Australia to Asia. We appreciate your presence at this conference, especially given our awareness of how difficult it is to find the time to be here in light of the busy schedules and multiple commitments that are typical of the lives of university presidents everywhere. Remarkably enough, only two of the persons invited were unable to attend, due to unavoidable complications.

Our meetings will begin officially tomorrow with two sessions devoted to economic and other trends in the Pacific Rim, moderated in the morning by President Jose V. Abueva of the University of the Philippines and in the afternoon by Vice-Chancellor Syed Hussein Alatas ( Sah-EED Hussein Ah-LAH-tas) of the University of Malaya. Our Friday morning session will focus on issues of greatest concern to Pacific Rim universities, moderated by Vice-Chancellor Lawrence W. Nichol of the Australian National University. In the afternoon,

Vice-Chancellor Wang Gungwu (Wong Gung-woo) of the University of Hong Kong will guide a discussion of how to strengthen international programs in the Pacific Rim. We will conclude our formal discussions on Friday afternoon with a panel I will moderate on the prospects and possibilities for future meetings.

There is little point in my anticipating these upcoming discussions of the Pacific Rim and its economic, political, and strategic significance, but it may be worth noting that when Ambassador Williams and I gaze from our offices--his in San Francisco, mine in the East Bay--towards the Golden Gate Bridge and beyond, the next landfall is Asia. Which means that what is conventionally known in this country and Europe as the Far East is in reality California's Near West. This realization that we are strategically astride a region that embraces both Western and Eastern civilizations, indeed the arena where they meet in such pronounced fashion, helps inform contemporary life in California and stimulates the convening of this conference, as well as our hopes for closer ties with universities throughout the region.

And we meet not just at a strategic place but at a strategic time. The Pacific Rim has emerged as a significant player on the global stage. In such a context, education has a special contribution to make. We share a common responsibility to



help prepare our respective societies for a future in which the nations of the Pacific Rim will become a more potent force in world affairs.

This conference, therefore, is a pioneering effort. Whether this effort will turn out to be worthy of our collective time and energies is a judgment only you as individuals can make. It is my earnest hope that over the next two days the active and involved participation of each of you--not only in our deliberations but in private conversations as well--will mean that when Friday night arrives you will look back on the time we have spent together and find it to have been worthwhile. And, more, that it will also suggest how an ongoing dialogue and continuing relationship among our institutions might further the cause of learning and cooperation throughout the growing, changing, and dynamic Pacific Rim.

Let me conclude by saying--once again--how pleased I am that the University of California is cooperating with the Asia Foundation to make this exciting event possible. Welcome to San Francisco and to what I hope will be a stimulating, rewarding, and fruitful set of meetings.