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CALIFORNIA AND THE PACIFIC RIM: A UC PERSPECTIVE

David P. Gardner, President
University of California

June 5, 1986
Oakland Rotary

Members of the Rotary Club of Oakland:

I'm delighted to be here today, especially because, as some of you may know, the University of California began in Oakland, on a site bounded by what is now Twelfth and Fourteenth streets and Harrison and Franklin Streets. In those days--the late 1850s--it was known as the College of California, and before long it acquired land in Berkeley because the rapid growth of the City of Oakland made such a move desirable. But the fact remains that UC's earliest roots are here in Oakland.

It is tempting, therefore, to talk about the University, its needs for state support, the contributions it makes to our society, why it is a splendid investment for the people of California to make in their own future, and so forth. I will refrain from doing so, however. Instead, I wish to discuss certain forces at work in society, here and abroad, that will influence our lives in countless ways in the coming years.

As the 1970s came to a close, more American trade crossed the Pacific Ocean than the Atlantic Ocean--for the first time in history. The gap continues to grow; and it will do so indefinitely. This development reflects a profound shift in

America's place in the world and in how it will come to view its global interests. For centuries we have looked to Western Europe not only culturally and politically but economically as well. We will continue to do so, but not with the same parochialism that we have in the past. What has been the Far East to Europe and indeed to the United States is, for California, our Near West. As the Pacific Rim emerges as a growing force in world affairs, our use of language, and our perceptions of the world, will never again be in the future what they have been in the past.

Some statistics: Asia buys a third of our grain exports, nearly one-fifth of our machinery exports, a quarter of our chemical exports, almost a third of our civilian aircraft exports, and more than half of the lumber we send abroad. The dollar total of our current trade with Japan is greater than American exports to France, West Germany, and Italy combined. Japan, in fact, is the largest American export market outside of Canada. And I need not remind this audience that the trade does not all flow westward, as our current balance of payment problems make amply clear. California's future as the gateway to Pacific trade is reflected in the fact that the port of Los Angeles now exceeds the Port Authority of New York/New Jersey in terms of net income; in a few years, the annual tonnage shipped through Los Angeles and Long Beach harbors is expected to outstrip New York as well. Governor Deukmejian summed it up over a year ago: "Economically speaking," he is quoted as saying, "the sun is now rising in the West."

The Pacific Rim--that vast stretch of nation-states along the eastern and western boundaries of the Pacific Ocean--makes up one of the most dynamic regions of the globe. And the reasons are not all economic. As Professor Robert Scalapino of UC Berkeley's Institute of East Asian Studies puts it:

More than one-half of the world's people live in the Asia-Pacific region. This vast area, moreover, contains a sizeable share of the world's natural resources. . . . Politically and strategically the world's major nations come into intimate contact in Asia, and here issues of global significance will be decided. In cultural and scientific exchanges as well, the center of gravity has unmistakably shifted to Asia. . . . As far as the United States is concerned, the twenty-first century is its Pacific Century.

As far as California is concerned, our Pacific Century has already begun. One telling indicator of this fact is the trade figures I have just mentioned. But another is our immigration statistics. The United States is experiencing a wave of immigration that rivals that of the turn of the century, and California is receiving some 30 percent of these immigrants--far in excess of our 10 percent of the nation's population. The majority of these newcomers arrive from Pacific Rim countries--Mexico, Central and South America, and Asia. One study estimates that roughly half of California's population growth during the 1970s was due primarily to this pattern of immigration.

These trends, of course, will have an enormous impact on every one of us. We are already feeling the impact of California's changing demographics at the University. Over the past six years, applications from Asians, foreign and native-born, have increased dramatically. Less dramatic, but nonetheless significant, increases have also come in the number of applicants with Hispanic backgrounds. Last fall, four of our campuses--Berkeley, UCLA, Irvine, and Riverside--admitted freshman classes that were composed of nearly 50 percent minority students, i.e., mostly Asian, Filipino, Hispanic, Black and Native American.

Circumstances have combined to offer California very special opportunities and very special responsibilities. By virtue of its geography, its economy, its history, its character, and its wealth, California is fitted to play a pivotal role in what will surely be one of the greatest centers of trade, commerce, and cultural exchange the world has ever known.

California is the most vibrant, creative, mobile, unsettled, and unsettling state in the nation. These qualities derive from the fact that we are less an established society than we are one in the making, and that our population is composed largely of persons who have come here from somewhere else. Only 45 percent of persons living in California were actually born here. This circumstance has produced its share of loneliness, social fragmentation, and political restlessness. But it has also

produced a willingness to take risks, to set tradition aside, to try new ideas, to experiment. We are a society open to and welcoming of talent, which is why we have attracted so much of it from throughout the world--in science, letters, business, commerce, and the arts.

Balanced against California's advantages, however, is one critical disadvantage. We are only beginning to position this state to deal with the changes that are coming our way as the nations of the Pacific Rim emerge as major players on the international scene.

Education makes the point as well as any. How many of our young people have studied or plan to study in the countries that neighbor us on the Pacific Rim? How many will learn about the culture of these peoples, their business practices, their ethics, their values, their art, their religion, their institutions and their economic, political and social systems? What programs do our colleges and universities offer to prepare students for a world in which the influence of the Pacific nations will be an increasingly dominant force? What are we doing to give our students a more complete understanding of the nations to our south, to our west, and to our north?

The answer is: not much, at least when compared with the scope and scale of our possibilities and the region of the world we seek to comprehend. And what we are doing tends to be scattered

and fragmented, and it involves relatively few students compared with the thousands enrolled in our institutions of higher education.

One study of international education, completed a few years ago in the San Francisco Bay Area, for example, sought to evaluate how well we are preparing students to understand the world in which they live. The results were predictably discouraging. It is entirely possible, according to the study, for an undergraduate to complete his or her education with "no significant preparation for working in the international marketplace," or for that matter, comprehending the interdependency of nations.¹ I have no doubt that what is true of the San Francisco Bay Area is very likely true of California generally.

In contrast to our spotty record in international education, students and citizens from other countries are making an effort to learn about us. The study I just mentioned points out that there are some 10,000 persons representing Japanese business interests in the United States, most of whom speak fluent English, many of whom have had the experience of studying at American universities. Compare their ability to understand and

¹Ruth Tebbets and Carl Zachrisson, Jr., "Educating for International Competence," The Bay Area and the World, 1984, pp. 17-18.

function in American society with the ability of their 600 American counterparts in Japan, most of whom speak little or no Japanese and most of whom know little or nothing about Japanese customs. In 1981-82 there were more than 59,000 foreign students enrolled in American business programs; how many of our students--in business or in any other subject--are studying abroad?

As a university president, I sometimes hear from unhappy California citizens who complain about the number of foreign students enrolled in our colleges and universities. We should, in my view, be less concerned about the number of foreign students studying in this country and more concerned about the fact that so few of our own young people are studying abroad.

So much for a description of the problem. What is the University of California doing to help California prepare for its Pacific Century?

First, we are trying to do more to let the interested and the motivated know about the wealth of scholarly resources related to the Pacific Rim that are already available on the University's nine campuses. We have some 13 centers that foster research on Asia, Latin America, and the Soviet Union. Several of them are at Berkeley, including the Institute of International Studies and the Institute of East Asian Studies. Of the major languages spoken along the Pacific Rim, English, Spanish and Russian are

taught at our eight general campuses; Chinese and Japanese are offered at most of them. Undergraduate and graduate students can choose among more than 50 majors in disciplines related to Pacific Rim countries. Through our Education Abroad Program--which offers the opportunity to study in a foreign university during the junior year--UC students can now study in seven Pacific Rim countries and political entities--Mexico, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, and Peru.

But we can and must do more. And so the second way we are seeking to help California get ready for the changes that lie ahead is by expanding our teaching, research, and public service offerings related to the Pacific Rim.

We are seeking state funds, for example, to expand opportunities for UC students to study in Pacific Rim countries. The University's Board of Regents recently approved the establishment of three new study centers in Korea, Japan, and Costa Rica; the establishment of new centers in Canada, New Zealand, Indonesia is under consideration. Scholarships will be made available to encourage more students to think about study in Pacific Rim countries and a modest faculty exchange program will be launched to ensure adequate faculty participation--a crucial element in the success of study abroad programs. And I am encouraging the University to think more than we tend to do about the

international dimensions of what we teach our students who remain here at home.

We are also launching a new, comprehensive University-wide research program focusing on the Pacific Rim. We envision a program that will involve faculty from throughout the University and will cut across many disciplines, including the sciences, humanities, social sciences, engineering, and performing arts. Major areas of mutual interest to the University and the State that will be studied include trade, finance, comparative economic development, public policy, cross-cultural communication, and changing technology and competition relating to Pacific Rim countries.

In addition to knowledge and information about the Pacific Rim, we also need professionals in business, industry, government, and elsewhere who understand the languages, culture, values, institutions, and economic structures of that region. The University of California at San Diego--already home to the famed Scripps Institution of Oceanography--is establishing a Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies. It will be the University's first school of international relations; there is only one other in this state, at the University of Southern California. Most of the nation's schools of international relations are on the east coast and, naturally enough, their focus is predominantly on the Atlantic rim countries. The School

at San Diego will be oriented to the Pacific and will contribute to California in three important ways:

-It will provide professional training for careers in the Pacific Rim in both the private and the public sectors-- business, government, international organizations, foundations, and the like.

-It will carry out research on the economic, political, social, cultural, technological, and security issues that confront the nations of the Pacific Rim.

-It will serve as a center for information on the Pacific Rim for the general public, disseminating information about events and trends in the Pacific region. And, of course, it will be an invaluable resource not just for the public at large, but also for business, industry, education, and government.

The final University contribution I want to mention is our work with the K-12 schools. If California is going to prepare for its Pacific century, there is no more important endeavor than educating our young people with a greater level of commitment than we have demonstrated in recent years. And here I am talking not just about international education but about education in the broader sense of providing students with the skills and knowledge they must have not just to get by but to thrive and succeed in a

world that is ever more interdependent economically, culturally, and politically. The University has begun a series of activities in the past few years to work in partnership with California's schools to help them become as excellent as they can and must be. It is, in my opinion, one of the most important contributions we can make to California's future.

We have an opportunity for historic greatness if we understand the significance of where we are, what we are, and what we can become. If we are animated by a committed desire to confront our opportunities, to deal with them constructively, and to invest in the human as well as the material resources needed to take hold of our future, California will make the most of its Pacific Century; and as one citizen of this remarkable state, I am convinced that California will do so.