

Mayor Wanibuchi's Speech  
at the Regional Council Meeting 7/21/82

Good afternoon!

My name is Mr. Wanibuchi and it means "alligator" in English. But I myself think I am very gentle.

It is my pleasure to be here with you. I thank you for your kindness and the chance to make a speech here.

The Kushiro Port has the highest fish landing in Japan and is also nearest to the State of Alaska geographically.

Those who came with me today are representatives of fishing industry and the port, including Mr. Jimpo, who is Speaker of the Kushiro City Council and who attended this meeting in January, 1977.

Our purpose for being in Alaska is to attend this meeting and to make a sister-city arrangement with Seward, Alaska. I am happy to announce that yesterday, Mayor Cripps and I signed our names in the written pact. Both the Cities of Anchorage and Seward have been business centers to Kushiro businessmen. Therefore, the State of Alaska and the City of Kushiro have developed mutual understanding, and material and personnel exchanges. I believe that the pact with the City of Seward will be a chance to strengthen and develop our relationships.

Within the 200 mile FCZ around the State of Alaska, fourteen Kushiro fishing boats are in operation. During their operation and their stay at your ports, the crew members have been taken care of, especially by Coast Guard officers and doctors and nurses in hospitals here.

As Mayor of Kushiro, I thank them very much for their kindness and assistance.

Now, I would like to briefly introduce the fishery industry in Kushiro. Please look at the pamphlet which I have handed out to you. The City of Kushiro is the central city of the eastern part of Hokkaido. Hokkaido is within the northern part of the Pacific Rim just like the State of Alaska, and both Hokkaido and Alaska have many aspects in common. Hokkaido is also the center for supplying fishery products. The Port of Kushiro landed about 800,000 tons of fish last year. This figure amounts to 7% of Japan's total fish catch and 35% of Hokkaido's fish catch. Thus, the City of Kushiro plays an important role for the fishing industry in the north Pacific.

This amount of fish landed at the Kushiro Port depends heavily on the waters around the State of Alaska. Within this fishing ground, many small trawlers and long liners are from Japan. A large amount of catch is landed at the Kushiro Port. The amount of fish landed at the Kushiro port, caught in Alaskan waters, becomes 35% of total Kushiro landings from foreign FCZ's.

Another characteristic of the Port of Kushiro is its importance in the import of marine products. Last year, we imported about 30,000 tons of marine products such as salmon, herring, crab and so forth, and 90% of them were from the State of Alaska. The wholesale markets facilities at Kushiro port are able to handle these products.

Most of the landings and imported marine products are processed by process-factories in Kushiro. There are about 150 factories which can process and handle these products in various ways, such as freezing, cold storage, canning, producing fishmeal and so forth. These factories can process maximum of 7,000 tons of fish a day. Kushiro has two other major industries besides fishing--they are the pulp and coal mining industries. However, the fishing industry uses most of the labor and therefore, about one fourth of the total labor population of Kushiro is in some way engaged in the fishing industry.

Six years have passed since the 200 mile law was implemented. The Japanese fishery condition has changed in these years, and I think the conditions in the U.S. have changed, too. It is true that in Kushiro city most fishermen and related laborers are having very difficult time since the law was enacted--such as a sudden rise of fuel price, high fishing fee to get in the water, insufficient fish catch quota and the imbalanced prices between fish and processed products. I think marine resources in the U.S. FCZ are becoming economically and socially more important for the U.S.

In order to overcome many difficulties I think we need to identify mutual interest under these circumstances. For instance, the amount of the joint ventures would have a direct effect on the fishermen and processors who work at the smaller enterprises in Kushiro.

My concern is that it will be more difficult for us in the future

to catch fish within your waters along with development of the U.S. fishery. That means the citizens of Kushiro will have a precarious life in the future.

The greatest desire I have is that you and we will have a chance to discuss whenever the problem comes up to us. Moreover, I hope we will be able to understand each other's situation, respect each other and keep our good relationship in the future.

The major policies for fisheries in Kushiro City are to expand consumption through finding new markets and developing new product technology. Let's take every opportunity to expand consumption which leads to importing larger amounts of fish from Alaska.

On purpose of enlarging Kushiro harbor, the City of Kushiro has been consolidating the harbor facilities---especially we have been doing our best to construct the new Kushiro West Port. This will function as a port for imports and exports. This port will assist to develop various industries based on imported resources.

I hope that the relationship between the State of Alaska and Hokkaido as well as Kushiro will be improved more through our ports. In this sense, the establishment of sister port relationship with the City of Seward has a promising future. Moreover, I wish the peoples of both Alaska and Kushiro will deepen their friendship. I request for your help in solving our problems.

Thank you very much.