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Record Group 220: Records of United States-Japan Economic Relations Group: A Guide to Its Records at the Jimmy Carter Library

Collection Summary

Creator: Department of State. U.S. Section of the United States-Japan Economic Relations Group

Title: United States-Japan Economic Relations Group

Dates: 1979-1981

Quantity: 6 linear feet, 2 linear inches, 14 containers

Identification:

Accession Number: 80-1.b

National Archives Identifier: 547

Scope and Content:

This collection consists of correspondence, schedules, memoranda, agendas, notes, speeches, press releases, wire copies, meeting minutes, and reports. The materials relate to the functions of the U.S. Section of the United States/Japan Economic Relations Group that was established as an ad hoc public advisory group of the Department of State on April 23, 1981, by 22 U.S.C. 2656. The Group examined factors affecting the bilateral economic relationship between the United States and Japan and made recommendations to the President and the Prime Minister designed to strengthen the relationship. Major topics include trade, economics, the steel industry, and computers.

Creator Information: Department of State. U.S. Section of the United States-Japan Economic Relations Group

On May 2, 1979, President Jimmy Carter and Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira met in Washington, D.C. and agreed to establish the Japan-U.S. Economic Relations Group, informally known as the "Wise Men." This small group of distinguished persons drawn from private life would submit recommendations to Carter and Ohira for maintaining a healthy bilateral economic relationship between the U.S. and Japan.

A year prior to Ohira's Washington visit was a time of great tension in U.S.-Japan relations. Statistics showed nearly a \$12 billion trade imbalance and Senator Lloyd Bentsen was speaking of import surcharges. The joint communiqué issued by President

Carter and Prime Minister Ohira in May of 1979, called for a more constructive approach to U.S.-Japan economic relations.

On June 25, 1979, during President Carter's bilateral summit meeting with Ohira in Tokyo, it was announced that the co-chairmen of the Group would be the former U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Robert Ingersoll, and the former Japanese Ambassador to the U.S. and External Affairs Minister, Nobuhiko Ushiba. Based on recommendations of the respective co-chairmen, three other members were appointed to both sides. The U.S. members were: Edson W. Spencer, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Honeywell, Inc.; A.W. Clausen, President and Chief Executive Officer of Bank America Corporation and Bank of America; N.T. and S.A., and Hugh T. Patrick, a professor of economics at Yale University. The Japanese members were Akio Muramoto, President of Dai Ichi Kangyo Bank, Ltd., and Kiichi Saedi, President of Nomura Research Institute. Along with the eight members of the Group, each side also had an Executive Director, Jack B. Button for the United States, and Tadashi Yamamoto for Japan.

The prime objective of the Group was to focus on the longer-range (3-5 year) potential frictions in the U.S.-Japanese economic relationship. The Group researched the issues and made recommendations to avoid clashes before they occurred. They attempted to avoid involvement in shorter-range issues that were managed by the two governments. Among the issues considered were:

- (a) The role of economic issues in the overall "political- security-cultural relationship", especially Japan's emerging position as a world power, its future comprehensive economic security needs, and its involvement in foreign assistance programs.
- (b) Comparing recent trends in productivity in both countries and recommending methods for improving U.S. productivity.
- (c) Considering a paper on the "openness" of the Japanese market and recommending practical and educational measures to expand the Japanese market to goods and investments.
- (d) Assessing the Japanese complaint that their exporters were subjected to "multiple harassment" by overlapping protective devices in U.S. legislation.
- (e) Analyzing past and possible future business cycles in the two countries and examining the role that unsynchronized cycles may play in causing trade imbalances.
- (f) A sectoral trade section discussed: (1) high technology (semi-conductors, computers, and telecommunications); (2) steel; (3) autos; and (4) agriculture in an attempt to predict the bilateral trading situation that would prevail in each area in approximately five years.
- (g) Conducting case studies of U.S.-Japanese economic disputes which had developed into political conflicts in order to identify common elements in those cases and recommend procedures for better future management of similar situations.
- (h) In the energy area: (1) considering the importance of acquiring secure supplies in order to avoid confrontation over energy sources; (2) examining research and development (R and D) for creating new synthetic fuels; (3) suggesting an appropriate U.S. policy toward Japan's nuclear energy development.
- (i) Analyzing the likely course of capital movements, especially Japanese and U.S. investments, in each other's country to determine their impact on bilateral relations.

The Group actively solicited the views of the public (Congress, business, agriculture, labor, and public interest groups) to provide an additional forum for those who wished to be heard. The Group also drew upon research that was currently under way in the two countries and sponsored a modest program of separate independent research to be jointly carried out.

The Japan-U.S. Economic Relations Group submitted its final report in January 1981. Their work was completed with the publication of a supplemental report in October 1981. The group was abolished on September 30, 1981, after submitting its final report. The collection was processed maintaining strict provenance.

Restrictions:

Restrictions on Access: These papers contain documents restricted in accordance with applicable executive order(s), which governs National Security policies, applicable statutes/agency restrictions, and material which has been closed in accordance with the donor's deed of gift.

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Related Material:

Related materials in this repository: Council of Economic Advisors, Domestic Policy Staff

Index Terms:

Limited to major topics under each category

Persons: Ambassador Robert Ingersoll, Jack Button, Edon Spencer, A.W. Clausen, Professor Hugh T. Patrick, Akio Muramoto, Kiichi Saedi, Tadashi Yamamoto, Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira, Ambassador Norihiko Ushiba

Subjects: Trade, economics, steel, industry, computers, automobiles

Places: Japan

Types of Material: Correspondence, schedules, memos, agendas, notes, speeches, press releases, wire copies, and reports

Administrative Information:

Preferred citation: [Type of Document], [Names of Sender and Recipient or Title of Document], [Date], [Collection Title], [Series Title], [Folder Title], [Box Number], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library.

Acquisition information: These historical materials were received under provisions of the instrument of gift that Jimmy Carter signed January 31, 1981.

Processing information: The first series of the collection was opened on March 3, 1988. Subsequent series in the collection were opened on March 3, 1988. The open dates are indicated in the series descriptions.

System of Arrangement:

The records of the United States-Japan Economic Relations Group are divided into two series:

Series Title	National Archives Identifier
United States-Japan Economic Relations Group Director's Chron Files	137530
United States-Japan Economic Relations Group Subject Files	137568

Detailed Description of the Collection

[United States-Japan Economic Relations Group Director's Chron Files](#)

Scope and Content: Containers 1-3. This series was opened on March 3, 1988. This series consist of memoranda, composed schedules, and agendas of meetings. Also included is Executive Director Jack Button's correspondence with the members of the Group. Arranged chronologically.

[United States-Japan Economic Relations Group Subject Files](#)

Scope and Content: Containers 4-14. This series was opened on March 3, 1988. This series consist of correspondence, memoranda, notes, speeches, press releases, wire copies, schedules, agendas, and reports including the final report. Topics include trade, the steel industry, meeting minutes, industrial policies, and productivity statistics. Arranged alphabetically by folder title.

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