

Floor Statement  
Congressman Les AuCoin  
March 8, 1979

MR. AuCOIN: Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 2479 as reported.

I have just returned from a 12-day visit to the People's Republic of China and am even more convinced of the wisdom of President Carter's move to normalize relations.

One of the primary dividends this action will yield is greater long-term stability in the Pacific Rim. And one of the primary beneficiaries of that stability should be Taiwan.

Normalization of relations between the United States and China recognizes the reality in the Far East, and it provides real security for Taiwan. We are now in a much stronger position to influence policy in Peking and, consequently, I feel the threat of armed invasion of Taiwan by China is greatly diminished.

Indeed, my visit to China persuades me that China sees much to gain by establishing practical working relations with Taiwan. It also has too much to lose now to take ill-conceived, precipitous actions against Taiwan.

I cannot predict, nor can anyone, whether full reunification of the mainland and Taiwan will occur and, if so, when and how. My instincts tell me, based on what I saw in China, that reunification will occur -- peacefully, gradually and to the mutual benefit of both China and Taiwan.

Each has much in common with the other. At the moment, each has common foe -- Soviet Union -- who they feel threatens the Far East. This common interest may very well serve as a starting point for real cooperation between the two.

As a number of Chinese officials told me privately during my recent trip: The two of us have worked together before against common enemies, there is no reason why we can't again. The United States should not do anything to disrupt any natural reunification processes.

Despite China's recent invasion of Vietnam, I firmly believe China desperately needs peace if it is to succeed in its unprecedented modernization program. This invasion in one sense can be seen as a pre-emptive strike to keep the Soviet Union at bay and buy time for China to pull itself by the bootstraps. But there is no evidence that China is mobilizing itself for war against Taiwan, or is about to launch a campaign of expansionism. There are too many pressing problems, and too many undeveloped acres, for that to occur, and I think responsible, rational Chinese leaders realize that -- all too painfully.

H.R. 2479 is important legislation, and legislation I consider vital if we are to keep our pledge to maintain viable economic and cultural ties with Taiwan. This legislation contains solid assurances for the continued security of Taiwan.

But as we consider this legislation and amendments today, I hope my Colleagues will remember that the world exists as it is, not as we wish it to be.

Many wish there could be two Chinas. The fact is there is only one China, just as there is only one Chinese people, whether they live in Shanghai, Taipei or San Francisco. Being Chinese is a common heritage for an entire people, regardless where they live or under what government they exist. Theirs is a heritage that has survived dynastic collapse, occupation, famine, floods, aberrations of government policy such as the Cultural Revolution and the upheaval of civil war.

As I left China, I carried with me a great respect for the Chinese people. Through the ages, they have achieved and maintained a high level of civilization. That civilization perseveres today, even though China is scrambling to escape from widespread poverty and under-development. I am convinced that if any underdeveloped nation can break through and modernize, it is China, because its people are committed to that goal.

My trip to China also showed me that we as a nation and a people have much to offer the Chinese -- and we have much to learn from them in return. I also learned that Americans and Chinese have much in common, and that commonality should be nurtured so we both can grow and prepare for a new century of challenges.

The keynote for our relationship with China and Taiwan must be flexibility. We should not lock ourselves into frozen positions. Events are moving rapidly in the Far East, and as shifts occur, we must adjust.

But there never has been a more golden opportunity for the United States to exert a constructive influence on this region than now. Our position has never been stronger, as we have friendly relations with the major powers in this region. Our constructive assistance to Japan and Taiwan following World War II is an example of world leadership not lost on China, which underwent a bitter experience with another example of world leadership whose aim was domination, not mutuality of benefits and equality.

We are not on the retreat in the Far East. Rather, we are moving forward, demonstrating responsible leadership. We have not deserted an ally. Our foreign policy in the Far East is evolving as a realistic, futuristic one. H.R. 2479 is a key building block of that evolving foreign policy, and therefore merits your support.