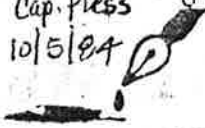


Editorial Views

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Atiyeh — skilled trade diplomat

After closely observing Oregon Gov. Victor Atiyeh for the three weeks he led the Far East trade mission to Japan and China, we give the second term state chief executive high emissarial marks.

It takes assiduousness and a lot of patience to overcome the tremendous language barrier between East and West. The formality of state visits is trying and sometimes exhausting.

In what seemed like an endless series of meetings with business leaders, heads of state, ministers, department officials, councilmen, and party leaders, Atiyeh represented Oregon well. The usually serious veteran Oregon politician even managed a few quips in laboriously translated conversations with his hosts.

Vic was accessible to the media too, granting a series of informal interviews to members of the press delegation throughout the trip.

The governor's audience with the Peoples Republic of China premier in Beijing was unexpected and considered by observers as remarkable and flattering, though it was a bum caper for the press. We were allowed only to take pictures for five minutes and "no questions" (PRC policy), then promptly escorted out of the great hall to stand in the rain 45 minutes and contemplate our second class citizenship while the head of a nation and a state exchanged pleasantries. Thankfully, this was the only time the press was excluded.

We were disappointed agriculture didn't have a higher profile on the trip, but Atiyeh countered that international trade development of Oregon's agriculture is so precocious it didn't need that much of his time and attention.

He praised Oregon Department of Agriculture assistant director Ken Meier (who was on the trip) for his extensive work in

marketing Oregon farm products and know-how abroad. The tenor of the mission clearly emphasized other industry, especially electronics and wood products.

Atiyeh's "finest hour" was the Sept. 23 inking of a sister province pact between Fujian (on the southeast coast of China) and Oregon. This subtropical, 120,000 square kilometer governmental entity has a population of 25 million. Major agricultural products are rice, sugarcane, oranges, tangerines, bananas, pineapple, litchi, flowers, bamboo and some timber.

The pact, signed by their governor Hu Ping and Atiyeh, was witnessed by a host of lesser Chinese politicians and the Oregon trade delegation members on the top floor of the provincial government headquarters in Fuzhou. We counted 74 Chinese officials at the event.

"This is what we came for," Atiyeh smiled as he signed the document at the 3 p.m. ceremony, which was followed by service of tea, fresh bananas and two lengthy but thoughtful English language movies about Fujian province. (Our education about the area seemed never to end.)

The sister-province agreement got off to a good start with a series of agreements on technology, industry, cultural and agricultural exchange that were hammered out between the Americans and Chinese during the visit. Whether the "benefactors will be the people of Oregon and Fujian," as it was stated, depends on the follow through over the next few months. For openers, Gov. Hu has said he will visit Oregon in late November, and several Chinese are planning exchange trips.

But the future of the Oregon-Fujian pact still rests with Atiyeh. And if his performance as a traveling ambassador is any indication, we would give this international exchange an unusual chance for success.