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GARY EICHTEN: Thank you, Perry. Six minutes now past 12 o'clock. And welcome back to Midday here on Minnesota Public Radio, I'm Gary Eichten.

Well, this past December, when many Minnesotans were planning winter getaway vacations, Walter Mondale was returning to Minnesota to stay. Mr. Mondale resigned last fall after serving three years as US ambassador to Japan, apparently bringing to an end a long career of public service and politics that included stints as a US Senator from Minnesota, state attorney general, and of course, Vice President of the United States.

And on top of all of that, Walter Mondale was the Democratic Party's nominee for president in 1984. Well, now he's back home. And despite the weather, maybe because of it, he's apparently here to stay. Mr. Mondale has been good enough to stop by our studios today to discuss some of his many experiences and some of the big issues of the day, and we invite you to join our conversation.

If you've got a question or comment for Walter Mondale give us a call. Twin City area number is 227-6000 or outside the Twin Cities 1-800-242-2828, 227-6000 or 1-800-242-2828. Our guest today, Walter Mondale, and we'd love to have you give us a call with your questions for Mr. Mondale.

Thanks so much for coming by, sir. Appreciate it. And the first question has to be, why Minnesota? Why not some nice warm weather place where you could luxuriate, kick back, entertain, visiting journalists, and the like?

WALTER MONDALE: Well, it's very simple, this is where both Joan and I want to be. I was born here and grew up here. My friends and my roots are here. 2/3 of our family is here, all of our grandchildren are here, and we love the state and we're glad we served in Japan for that period, but we're very glad to be home.

GARY EICHTEN: Now you have gone back to work for Dorsey, Whitney.

WALTER MONDALE: Yes, I'm back with my old law firm, Dorsey and Whitney, and back in action, I hope, in Minnesota.

GARY EICHTEN: Any special areas you're going to be focusing on?

WALTER MONDALE: Well, international concerns, we have a large international practice with offices around the world. I will be working in area of high tech, merging companies, that thing. And in other areas as well, but those are two areas of specialization.

GARY EICHTEN: Now, is it likely that a lot of companies will call you up and use your expertise in Japan? Is that thing happening?

WALTER MONDALE: Well, it may be, I'm not and will not try to specialize in Japan. I've spent the last 3 and 1/2 years there, but that's not the idea. This is the largest law firm in the upper Midwest. It's now one of the largest law firms in the country. And it has a broad range of legal services and I intend to work across the board.

GARY EICHTEN: You were gone for three years, you came back, of course, once a year or so a couple of times a year. During the course of time that you were away overseas and now you're back, has Minnesota changed much? Has the United States changed much in that time?

WALTER MONDALE: Well, basically not. It's the same state and it's the same country. If there's one thing going on that impresses me, it's the growing effect of globalization of the world's economy on all of us. And that's certainly true in Minnesota.

In Japan, I used to watch with pride the number of Minnesota companies that are very heavily engaged over there, and many of them doing very well, like Northwest Airlines and Cargill and Medtronic and Honeywell and 3M and the list is quite long. And what we're finding now, and what we have to do as a state is realize that so much of our future is involved around the globe.

In a few days I'm going to be speaking to the state legislature. They have a private series or forum, they call it their forum where they talk about long term issues. And I'm going to be talking about science and technology and internationalization and what we have to do in Minnesota to get this next generation ready to compete all over the world. I guess that's one of the trends that I find most impressive, not only in Minnesota, but throughout the country.

GARY EICHTEN: Do you think we're ready for that? Are we ready for this new world?

WALTER MONDALE: In many, many ways, we're doing very well. I think those companies that I mentioned and many, many others in Japan is a sign that we're doing quite well. But we need to emphasize support for basic education.

Every one of our young people need to have basic skills. They need to have very good reading and arithmetic skills and the rest, or they're not going to be able to make it. And we need to support science and technology and have a close working relationship between centers of excellence and research and our private businesses, as we do today.

Many, many of Minnesota's high tech businesses are spin-off from our universities and colleges in our state. So we need to really work on that.

GARY EICHTEN: You said right before you left Japan that it is essential that Americans understand just how important Japan is to America's future. What did you mean by that?

WALTER MONDALE: Well, you can look at it several ways. Japan is the second largest economy in the world. We have a tremendous economic stake there now. I think it's our largest agriculture market and food market in the world now, going up 10%, 15% a year.

Many, many of our high tech companies, software companies, advanced science companies and the rest are finding markets in Japan. So economically it's important. It's important for peace and stability.

In my lifetime, the three great wars all started in Asia and how the United States and Japan works together, the strength of that security alliance, our ability to trust each other and work together to build economic growth, stability, avoid war, find answers to great problems in the world like the environment and poverty and so on.

Our ability to do that as a nation will be partly involved with how well we get along with Japan because Japan is so important now.

GARY EICHTEN: We keep hearing a lot about China, and that China is going to be the real big power in the next century. Is China actually more important than Japan to us?

WALTER MONDALE: Well, I think that's as we say, a false question. They're both going to be very important. Japan is now a larger economy. She is much wealthier, she has enormous cash reserves. But China is making very impressive progress now.

But China has some deep unresolved political problems. She has a long way to go, it seems to me. She's developing her economy well, but there are many, many issues right now we're having with China. Will she join the World Trade Organization? That sounds like a legal technical question.

But the fact of it is, in order to do that, she must first open up her system. We're now running a deficit with China in trade that often is larger month to month than the deficit we're running with Japan because too many parts of our markets are closed. China is buying a lot high tech military equipment, particularly from Russia.

We've been pressing China to be more what we say transparent and open about what her military plans are. I don't say this in a scary sense because China is not an enemy, but we have a lot of work to do in working with China to get a more positive relationship than we have today.

GARY EICHTEN: In general, do the Japanese or Chinese for that matter, other Asian nations like the United States, or do they view us as being?

WALTER MONDALE: Very good question. And I think that the answer is basically yes. There was recently a public opinion poll, I think about 65% or more of the Japanese listed the United States as their favorite nation, and I think that is correct. But there's also a lot of touchiness about it.

We've had a troubled history leading up to World War II and including the war. We have a security relationship that continues to require a lot of attention. We have a lot of trade disputes, and I think we're going to have more of them.

While the Japanese say that, it is not quite as simple as your question, and the same way going in the other direction. Surveys show that what's the most important country to the United States, consistently those polls list Japan as the most important. And there are many, many other important nations, of course.

So it's touchy, it takes work, very different cultures. We look at the same facts and come up with different conclusions, but no one could deny our importance to each other.

GARY EICHTEN: Well, if you'd put your headphones on there, we'll get some listeners involved here. Our guest today is Walter Mondale, former Vice President, former US ambassador to Japan, Walter Mondale. If you'd like to join our conversation, if you've got a question for Mr. Mondale, give us a call.

Our Twin City area number is 227-6000, 227-6000. Or if you're calling from outside the Twin Cities, you can reach us toll free at 1-800-242-2828, 227-6000 or 1-800-242-2828. John you're first.

JOHN: Good afternoon, Mr. Mondale. I had a one comment and one question for you. My wife and I were in Japan for the last six years, and we just came back as well. And I really respected the way you handled the situation in Okinawa with the rape of the school girl.

WALTER MONDALE: Thank you. What were you doing there?

JOHN: I was teaching in Tokyo.

WALTER MONDALE: Great.

JOHN: And so I know a lot of the Japanese people just really appreciated when you expressed your outrage and condolences to the family and apologized and made it a lot easier, I think for us Americans who are there who are experiencing such shame. And then I think you did a very good job of communicating how appalled we were at that as well.

WALTER MONDALE: I think that Americans were humiliated by that, and I include our American military. I know several of the people I talked to in the service over there said, we're doubly embarrassed because we're Americans, but also we're wearing the American uniform. And to have this young 12-year-old girl raped by three grown men in uniform was just so appalling.

And, of course, I did what I think Americans would want. I immediately apologized, and we tried to do whatever we could to make it clear that we were deeply embarrassed, and we hope we could do something about it.

JOHN: Well, thanks for that. My question was, I was wondering what your current relationship was with former President Jimmy Carter, and if you had any plans on getting involved with his organization or what your friendship was with him?

WALTER MONDALE: I'm glad to say we remain very good friends. That is not always the case between presidents and vice presidents. But we got along very well during those four years in the White House, some of which were pretty tough, as you know. But our relationship remain strong. and Joan and Rosalind, the same is true.

And so we've remained friends ever since. And whenever he traveled to Japan, I would see him and sometimes he'd stay overnight with us. And that remains the same today.

GARY EICHTEN: There is a book out by Peter Bourne, former Carter aide, who said that you were really upset with Jimmy Carter when you were vice president that he was not spending enough on social programs, spending too much on defense, and all of that, is that a true report?

WALTER MONDALE: In spirit, absolutely not. We had debates over issues but the way we handled them is typical Carter. I had unlimited access to the president. I was in the Oval Office many times a day. And once a week we'd have a private lunch where I would bring my concerns and we would discuss them privately, and that was how we handled it.

What Mr. Bourne's writing about is a big, you might call it, a dispute, I guess it was that surrounded a series of meetings up at Camp David where the president was asking about midterm and his administration, what his course in policy should be.

And our polls were very low at the time. The administration seemed to be dead in the water. Remember those gas lines and energy shortages, and I think people were very troubled by all of it. Inflation was beginning to rise, and there were some recommendations by some that problem was that the people were in a malaise, and the president ought to speak to that.

I was very strongly opposed to that feeling. I still do that the American people had legitimate concerns that had to be addressed by the administration. And the problem was not to be found in the people, but rather what we needed to do to make a change in prospects. And that's what that book's about. And I think in terms of the tone that he says I use, and so on, I don't remember it that way at all.

GARY EICHTEN: Beth, your question for Walter Mondale, please.

BETH: Mr. Mondale, first of all, I want to say God bless you. It's because of people like you with honesty and integrity that I'm proud to call myself a democrat, and it's people like you that I look to for leadership.

**WALTER
MONDALE:**

BETH: I just want to say I'm concerned about the lack of significant labor and environmental agreements in GATT and NAFTA. CEOs and stockholders of the multinationals are doing well with these overseas industries, but isn't this causing a downward spiral for average workers and taxpayers in this country? And how will this be corrected?

I see this creating more part time workers with no benefits or health care in this country. I think a significant problem is a lack of campaign finance reform, which the American people don't seem to understand the connection yet. But if there's some way, please try to address some of my questions.

**WALTER
MONDALE:** That was a very good question and has several elements. I do not believe there's a way that America can escape being a part of the world's economy, and I realize that's not what you were asking. But once that is accepted and America has such an enormous stake in the world in building exports and investments, and so on, that we would be the first big loser if we tried to.

Having said that, there are certain things that I would like to see much more emphasis on or more success on than we've seen to date. One is the exploitation of workers in certain societies using prison labor, using exploited labor. And I would like to see stronger international rules about that.

The environment, same thing. We need to make much more progress internationally in the environment. I think the administration is trying hard to get some new rules that would work more effective internationally there. There are many societies that still brutalize their environment in an attempt to save costs in the production of goods, or because they simply don't have the money to do anything about it if they want to.

I certainly agree with you that more needs to be done. On our side I think we've got to do a much better job of educating our young people because young people without skills, without the ability to read and write and with numerical skills, and so on, are really going to be in bad shape and are in bad shape today, many of them.

There certainly is a crying need for campaign finance reform. That's something I've believed for many, many years, I fought for it clear back in the '60s and the '70s and I still think that great changes are needed.

GARY EICHTEN: Did all presidents invite people to stay over at the White House? That seems to have caught a lot of attention, the sleepovers at the Lincoln bedroom is a symbol of just how out of whack our system has become, or at least that's the charge anyway. Is that been a pretty traditional practice?

**WALTER
MONDALE:** Let me just say this. I think there's a lot of people throwing stones now that live in glass houses. The campaign finance situation is dreadful.

The pressure for ever more money in campaigns is forcing public leaders out of sheer survival to press for more and more campaigns funds. I suspect that the White House has been used in the past to soften up people who might want to give more money. I would be surprised if that's not the case.

I don't recall it happening during our period, but I cannot tell you that I know. But what I do know is that these laws need to be changed and strengthened, and we need to do something to restore public trust in the process of funding our campaigns. The other thing that's happened is the incredible increase in the amount that's being spent.

The last time I ran for the Senate in Minnesota, I think I spent a little less than \$700,000 and won. Today I think there are very few campaigns for the Senate that spend less than \$4 or \$5 million, maybe more. Some of them spend more than that, and you can see that same thing running all over American politics.

So I think we need spending ceilings that are enforceable, that put some sensible limit on how much can be spent, as well as other changes. You notice one of the questions already raised this. I often quote Abraham Lincoln, who said, "With public trust, everything is possible. Without it, nothing is possible."

And the greatest cost of the current American morass of campaign financing is that it strikes the most fundamental of all issues, trust itself.

GARY EICHTEN: Do you think a system can be devised that will, in fact, restore that trust? Or will somebody just write up a nice system that looks pretty good, and then 10, 15 years down the road, all loopholes are found? That's what happened with the Watergate campaign finance reforms.

WALTER MONDALE: Yes. But my answer is a solid yes, of course. This is most powerful and most dynamic society, free society on Earth. And the idea that something like this would be beyond our capacity is, for me, an astonishing concept.

If we pass a law that aims at spending ceilings and some of these other abuses, and then in a few years, we find there's a loophole, fill it right away. But by all means, let's get committed to the concept that this must change.

GARY EICHTEN: Our guest today is former Vice President, former US ambassador to Japan, Walter Mondale. And if you'd like to join our conversation, give us a call. Our Twin City area number is 227-6000, 227-6000. Or if you're calling from outside the Twin Cities, you can reach us toll free at 1-800-242-2828, 227-6000 or 1-800-242-2828. Mark, your question for Mr. Mondale, please.

MARK: Thank you, sir. Welcome back to Minnesota and the private sector.

WALTER MONDALE: Thank you.

MARK: My question, however, follows up on what you've been discussing. If Senator Thompson's investigation should somehow exculpate Vice President Gore, would you let the American public have another chance to select you as president?

WALTER MONDALE: Well, we've got enough problems now without visiting that debacle on the American people. First of all, let's be a little patient about what some of these things that we read about may lead to. And let a process develop that allows these things to be looked at in their entirety.

But if I understand your question correctly, I've been in public life for many, many, many years, and I fully expect and fully plan that job in Japan was my last public job.

GARY EICHTEN: But you're not ruling it out altogether?

WALTER Oh, yes, I'm ruling it out altogether. I want to be understood there. [LAUGHTER]

MONDALE:

GARY EICHTEN: Rachel, your question for Mr. Mondale?

RACHAEL: I've got two quick comments and a question. The first comment is, I really appreciated John's comment and your response to Ambassador Mondale regarding the Okinawa situation. And I wanted you and John both to know my appreciation.

The second one is that we have-- my second comment, we hear and we have heard throughout your time in Japan a great deal about your official activities and have been appreciative of that in Minnesota. What I'd like to know is, does the structure, the ambassadorial structure, and so forth, does it allow you to come to know ordinary Japanese people and they to know you and Mrs. Mondale?

WALTER Yes and no. One of my big handicaps was that I didn't speak the language. So when I was talking to people, I had
MONDALE: a full time interpreter. But it's not the same thing even though I had a superb interpreter.

I would often come in contact with nonofficial Japan, or I loved to walk the streets in, say Saturdays or Sundays and just look around and in the process you'd come to meet people that were not government officials, and so on, and talk with them, and so on. And in other ways I came to know quite a few.

But I would say that in the spirit of your question, it was not totally satisfactory.

GARY EICHTEN: Larry, your question for Mr. Mondale.

LARRY: Yes. My understanding is that because Japan was not allowed to have a military after World War II and we were apparently responsible for the defense of Japan. This allowed them the finances to put into research and development, which they did. If this is the case, why is it necessary for us to maintain-- why do we still do this? Why do we defend Japan?

WALTER First of all, Japan provides more host nation support than any other nation where our troops are found overseas
MONDALE: so that it would actually cost more to sustain our forces, the same forces in the United States. But that's not the reason we're in Japan. We're in Japan for our own security interests. I mentioned earlier that the three great wars in my lifetime all broke out in Asia.

The US forces in Japan are the only source of security in that region, which has been historically very, very unstable. And the US-Japan alliance, the US-Korean alliance allows us to sustain stability, to sustain the open navigability of the seas, and to be hopeful that, that region will move toward more openness, less reliance on military, and more peaceful future.

Every administration for many years has come to the same conclusion. My 3 and 1/2 years in Japan convinced me even more that it's in our interest to be there. This is not a gift or a charity.

GARY EICHTEN: Gordie, your question please.

GORDIE: Mr. Mondale, I've appreciated your views on foreign affairs for years now. I'm interested in your view on our current position with Cuba. I visited the country a couple of times and see our embargo as immoral at best, and it doesn't seem to make much political sense either or even economic sense, but I would like to hear your views on that. That's my question.

WALTER MONDALE: Well, let me say I'm not an expert on that. I have thought about it a little bit. This Castro is a unique person on the world scene now. He runs dictatorial society.

When we were in office, we tried to see if we could make progress with Castro. And we, during our period there, set up the interest section that still exists in Havana, where American diplomatic personnel are there. But it's not as a normal embassy, but they can do some work there.

And we all made some changes in fishing rights and we got an agreement to let families visit each other more often. And right in the middle of this effort to work with them, he gave us the Mariel boat people and sent them over there, and several of them were killed or died en route. It was really a cruel and cynical thing.

And I've never gotten over that experience of trying to find a way to find common ground, only to be given that response. I just don't have an answer other than that. But in my experience, I've found him a very difficult person to work with.

GARY EICHTEN: Michael is up next calling from Saint Paul, go ahead please.

MICHAEL: Mr. Mondale, it's a pleasure to hear your considered and measured responses to these questions, I have two. The first is a while ago I heard you say that we should be able to plug the loopholes that the Senate and Congress find when good laws are made. I wonder why we can't do that and do it more quickly on all good laws that are passed?

And Secondly, the question of restoring honor and respect to the two institutions, rather than having each party say to the other, well, the other one did it or did it more of it?

WALTER MONDALE: That's right. The losers today are the American people and our country. And this is not a time for, in my opinion, just political tactics. We need to find a deeper sense of resolve. We need to rise above these things that have paralyzed progress in the past, and get the campaign finance reform that makes a difference.

And as I said, I'm convinced it can be done. The idea that our country does not possess the capacity to solve a problem like this, I find unbelievable. I spent many years in the Senate in Washington, and many times things that I thought we'd solved proved not quite to work the way I'd hoped they'd worked. Well, that's experience.

There's no reason you can't amend those things. I accept the correctness of the implication of your question. Well, why didn't we? And my answer is we didn't and there's no excuse for it. We ought to get on with it.

GARY EICHTEN: Are there too many issues that are treated in a partisan manner in Washington? Phrased another way, what issues actually should be treated in a partisan manner?

You get the sense that a lot of times Democrats vote for things because they're Democrats, and Republicans vote for things because they're Republicans. And with not a whole lot of thought given to the public policy implications.

**WALTER
MONDALE:**

Well, I think that's a little raw. [LAUGHTER] I think there's a lot of people trying very hard in these days with so much seems to be skepticism and cynicism around. I think there's a lot of very good people in public life that don't get credit for trying very hard all the time. Again, I think that, that was certainly my experience and I'm sure it's true today.

When our nation was founded, the idea and the big fear was that America would be ripped apart by factions. And so our system was set up contemplating that we would not have political parties. We'd elect a president through a board of electors, who were going to be distinguished citizens from each state that would pick the best person. And we wouldn't have parties and so on.

Well, very quickly within, I bet, less than a year people started organizing themselves in the United States from a political party standpoint and started pressing viewpoints. And of course, we had the Whigs and then the Republicans and the Democrats and all the rest is history.

If those divisions in America, which often reflect real differences in American society, are pursued in strong, vibrant, often fractious ways, but we all keep in mind that the purpose for this is to ventilate issues so that we can come up with better answers, then it should be positive. And I think you'd have to say the experience in the United States overall has been a positive one.

But if you somehow have this model that America should be a quiet, saintly discussion society where virtue and facts will rise naturally, like a cork to the top of the water, I don't think that's the way society works. Irresponsible partisanship, cheap partisanship just trying to attack and hector, I hope is seen by all as contrary to the best interests of our society.

But responsible partisanship where you use these differences in order to ventilate issues so that we might make better decisions is not only fundamental to our society, but in many ways essential.

GARY EICHTEN: Susan, your question for Walter Mondale, please.

SUSAN: Thank you. Mr. Mondale, it seems so obvious to me that the correct man to be the new president of the University of Minnesota was returning from Japan, and I was wondering if anybody besides me came up with that idea. You would have made a marvelous president.

**WALTER
MONDALE:** Well, I'll tell you if you knew what grades I got when I went to the university, I think you'd come out on the other side of this issue. [LAUGHTER] I don't think that would be right for me. I have no background in academia or administration of a university, it's a different world. And I really like the current president, I think he's trying very hard.

It's a very tough job, and I hear very good things about the upcoming president. So I think the main thing now, and I'm going to be as I mentioned, talking to the legislature in a couple of days, I think our institutions of higher education, particularly the university because of its graduate school, and so on, needs a very high level of support now. It's really an indispensable institution to our future. I thank you for your kind words, though.

GARY EICHTEN: This is Midday on Minnesota Public Radio. Our guest today, former US ambassador to Japan, former Vice President, former Minnesota Senator Walter Mondale. If you'd like to join our conversation, if you've got a question for Mr. Mondale, give us a call.

227-6000 is our Twin City area number, 227-6000. Outside the Twin Cities 1-800-242-2828, 227-6000 or 1-800-242-2828. Chris, you're up next.

CHRIS: Mr. Mondale, this is indeed an honor. I would like to ask you now in your experience with the legislation at the federal level if you could give a perspective on the role of special interests now and versus the common good? And I guess an example would be the highly touted 1996 communications legislation that came through the federal government.

I was wondering if you could just comment on that, and I'll hang up to hear your response. Thanks.

WALTER MONDALE: I don't know enough about that 1996 Act to comment on it. I was in Japan at the time. I was reading the news, but I really don't know enough about it to feel I can give a responsible answer, but I'll go back to my earlier answer about the process in America.

I think everybody listening to me today or most everybody belongs to some organization because we're the greatest joiners in the world, Americans. Some organization that's got an office in Washington is banging on the doors of members of the Congress wanting something. And that is just the way our system works.

But what we need to do is make certain it's positive that it's open. We certainly need to change the way we finance our campaigns so that money has a lot less to say about how these decisions are made and the arguments themselves mean more. And I guess in addition to that, we need to be more responsible as we approach those organizations of which we are a member.

That's not a very good answer because I think in essence, democracy is by nature a controversial, emotional, perhaps overly organized attempt by some 220 million people each to get their own way. And out of it comes this process we call democracy.

I think it's easy to emphasize the failures and the disappointments, but through it all, the United States over the past some 200 years plus has become the strongest, most vibrant, powerful, and impressive nation in the world. My time in Japan and international relations, the role of the United States, The influence and power of the United States, not just in military terms, but in terms of setting a standard of showing an example is without parallel.

This was done by the people of the United States through a free system. And as we complain about the spots and the warts in America, we must also remember there must be something we're doing right here. It should all be a downer.

GARY EICHTEN: Let me ask you this along the same lines, do you get the sense that for the most part the average person is pretty well-represented in Washington or is it just the rich people who get good representation?

WALTER MONDALE: Well, I would ask each citizen to ask that question about their own member of Congress and their own Senators. Do you think that they're representing you or not? If the answer is no, get somebody else.

GARY EICHTEN: Next caller is from Plymouth, Charlie?

CHARLIE: Thank you for taking my call. Sir, this is Charlie [? Rutridge, ?] your former baggage handler from the '84 campaign.

WALTER Wow. Hi, your office.

MONDALE:

CHARLIE: Well, I'm proud to have served you in that capacity.

WALTER Well, that's important because you lose your baggage, you're in bad shape.

MONDALE:

CHARLIE: Well, I felt responsible too if your suits were wrinkled or anything like that.

WALTER Oh, you're the guy?

MONDALE:

CHARLIE: That's right. I was just wondering, considering how your celebrated career along the last 30 or 40 years that you've been involved in so many of the major issues that have faced this state and this country. I was wondering if you were considering writing your memoirs or anything like that?

WALTER Oh, as a matter of fact, after this program, I'm going to go over to the Minnesota Historical Society to see finally
MONDALE: what I call King Tut's tomb, my room full of records and files from all of those years.

I doubt that I'll write a book, but I hope over the next few years, to give some speeches on key issues as I see them, and maybe comment on some of the things I've been through in what I think they tell us.

So many of these questions today if you unwrap them, they're expressing doubts about the integrity or the effectiveness of the political system to deliver on the public good in America. And I think there's certainly a lot that we've got to do to improve the process.

On the other hand, I think there's plenty of room for optimism. There's plenty of reason to reject all of these conspiracy theories that question the integrity or the decency of people in office.

And I would like to see Americans as they honestly attack the problems also to couple that with a little more hope and a little more belief in the decency of most people who represent them.

GARY EICHTEN: Mike is on the line from Barnum with a question for Walter Mondale.

MIKE: Hi. Well, thank you for taking my call.

GARY EICHTEN: Thank you.

MIKE: Mr. Mondale, I was listening to you in my car on the way home, and I had to rush to the phone.

WALTER Oh, thank you.

MONDALE:

MIKE: I understand the importance of a global economy while moving there. Increasingly, the US is becoming a service-oriented economy in many respects. You mentioned earlier about some Minnesota businesses Cargill to name one of the few that you did mention doing business in Japan.

After the implementation of NAFTA and GATT, there's been a lot of media scrutiny and a lot of people in the US scrutiny about US corporations moving overseas and exporting jobs. How would you answer that to somebody, say, in Minnesota, looking for a job, perhaps with Cargill or 3M or one of the major companies?

**WALTER
MONDALE:**

Japan is now our largest agricultural market, let's begin with agriculture. We sell about \$16 or \$17 billion worth of American farm and food products in Japan. It is, I think, our largest foreign market in the world. That's certainly good for Minnesota and so on.

Northwest Airlines, for example, the largest American carrier in Asia, is the largest employer, I think, in Minnesota, the largest taxpayer in Minnesota. And those are good paying jobs. And Northwest continues to grow, in part because it's so strong in Asia.

Or Medtronic, one of the most advanced medical technology companies in the world. Has a big market in Japan, and a lot of that shows up in jobs and opportunities in Minnesota. Andersen and Marvin Windows, for example, are selling a lot of windows, a lot of those are made in Minnesota.

I think there's all kinds of examples of where this has served the economy of our state. Having said that, we still need to do a better job of educating our young people, equipping them for this future and the rest. A competition is just that. It's tough and we need to work hard as I did. I worked every day trying to open up Japan's market more fully to American goods and investment.

GARY EICHTEN: Do you think American consumers should give preference to products that are made in America when they go to the marketplace? If they have a choice, say, between two TVs, I don't know, two TVs, one made here, one made in Japan, should they buy the one made in America?

**WALTER
MONDALE:**

Well, I'll be frank, I've got that in my head. But on the other hand, and we need to fight to keep the American competitive edge, and I hope the answer to your question is mostly that the American product is better and it's better priced.

But if we have a strategy in a world economy where there is a competitive product that's better and less expensive, I think we'll find no matter what our public policy is, the consumer will go in that direction. So the answer has got to be to make certain that American products are better and better priced. And we're doing better than anybody else in the world on that.

We have the most productive economy in the world. American exports have been rising smartly, and although there's still difficulties around and the kind we've discussed here and others, I think our long term future is to be found in mastering those markets and not trying to hide from them.

GARY EICHTEN: Mary, your question for Walter Mondale, please.

MARY:

Mr. Mondale, when you ran for president, the issue of taxes and your feeling, as I understood it was that they needed to be raised. That issue is still a paramount issue.

Right now in Minnesota there's a debate about whether the property tax should be reduced or on the other hand, business taxes for property should be reduced. I mean, whether for the common people, it should be changed. And I'm interested in what your feeling is about taxes. We can't run a good government without the money in every case.

Second question I have concerns, my sense that there's a basic conflict between large industry, particularly the multinationals and the common people who work for a living or who aim to work for a living because the one is looking always for profits, while the common man is interested only in comfortable well-being. And that seems to be an ongoing conflict. I'd like your opinion on these questions.

**WALTER
MONDALE:**

Well, I haven't been in the middle of the local revenue debates. I haven't studied them, so I'm going to pass judgment on that. But I will tell you what I had in mind in 1984 when I ran and said, if you elect me, I'm going to raise your taxes. At that time, we were running deficits of \$250 billion a year, and they were going to go up as high as \$500 billion or maybe \$400 billion at the time.

And this was really starting to affect our ability to sell overseas, the interest bill on our debt was soaring and has soared since then, and I thought it was a disaster. And I thought to run for president and not tell the people what I was thinking about and how I saw it was such that if I wasn't willing to tell the truth, I shouldn't run.

My opponent slipped around that issue and after they were elected, over the several years, taxes have been increased several times, many by people who said they would never do it. But if you looked at the predicament we were in at that time, if you could get through the first grade in arithmetic, you knew that something had to happen and some of it would include revenue increases.

It's not because I like tax increases. It's not because I like to pay taxes. That's not it, but we had to do this in order to have a fiscal situation that had any sanity to it at all. And that's what reality finally drove us to.

Now the world has changed so much recently, and the need for competitive companies to sell American products around the world has been such that many of these corporations have, as your question implies, gotten quite large.

But if they will behave responsibly, if they will try to be good citizens, and I think many of them are doing just that, they can be a very positive contributor to our society. So I would answer that based upon the policies of the company, rather than on the size of the company.

GARY EICHTEN: Mr. Mondale, we are virtually out of time here, but I have to get a quick comment from you. Paul Wellstone for president, does that make good sense to you?

**WALTER
MONDALE:**

Paul's a good friend of mine. It's a little early to answer those questions. I think I'll stop right there. [LAUGHTER]

GARY EICHTEN: Thanks so much for coming by today. Our guest, former Vice President, former US ambassador to Japan, former Minnesota Senator Walter Mondale. And would you like to thank Mr. Mondale for coming by today? Mr. Mondale resigned as US ambassador to Japan late last fall and he's now back in Minnesota in private life.

I'd like to thank all of you who've been with us through the hour, especially those of you who called in or tried to call in with your questions and comments. We'll be rebroadcasting this program, by the way, at 9 o'clock tonight here on Minnesota Public Radio. Tomorrow, Westminster Town Hall Forum with social commentator and critic Jeremy Rifkin. Gary Eichten here, thanks for tuning in today.