

Speech at the Graduation Ceremony of Wesleyan University

27th May, 2007

President Bennet, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am truly happy to have been invited back to Wesleyan University, and it is a great honor and a privilege for me to accept this very prestigious honorary degree.

Forty years ago, I attended Wesleyan for one year, and had an opportunity to study at this lush and beautiful campus. I was warmly welcomed by the kind and caring members of the faculty and staff and also by the friends I made at the Commons Club and the Rugby Club. They taught me the most effective ways to earn credits, and how to get to know female students from other colleges. My only regret was that Wesleyan University went coed several years after I left!

Twenty-four years ago, I became a Japanese Congressman, and I have served twice as Minister of Education. During my tenure, I worked on some changes in the Japanese university system that would allow smaller universities to aspire to the glowing standards that I observed here at Wesleyan University.

In recent years, when I was Minister of Foreign Affairs, I endeavored to establish the most desirable relationship with the United States, which is the most important country for Japan.

In closing, I'd like to wish President Bennet, all members of the faculty and staff of Wesleyan University, and all who are attending this graduation ceremony here today, good health and prosperity. May Wesleyan University continue to grow and flourish, and may there continue to be lasting friendship between the United States and Japan.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much.