

Ambassador Jon M. Huntsman, Jr.
Media Roundtable
Xiamen
January 21, 2010

Question: From the Dongnan Kuai Bao (Southeast Express News). Mr. Ambassador, now the Internet is well developed in China. In China there are 360 million Internet users. How do you look at this group of people, and China's current public opinion on internet?

Ambassador Huntsman: Obviously the United States has relied enormously in recent years on the free flow of information. We believe that access to information, the free flow of information are critical to our economic survival in the United States. In today's world, whether it's business or whether it's movie making or whether it's in the world of arts, or whether it's in academia, the free flow of information will increasingly be an important part of a country's advancement and development.

It's also a very important check on good government. I was an elected official in America before I came here, I was a Governor. And the free flow of information is also critical to good government in the sense that it identifies corruption and it identifies bad behavior and it creates a cleaner environment for governance and public policy.

America doesn't have a perfect governance system. No one has a perfect governance system. But the free flow of information, particularly over the internet, has been a very important check and balance in the United States in keeping elected officials honest and in maintaining a flow of information that has made the citizens more powerful, the people more powerful, because they've had information that they wouldn't have had otherwise.

You've seen advances here in China over the years. All the internet users, 350 million internet users, tens of millions of bloggers. China has come some distance in terms of use of the internet. I have every confidence that over the next generation there will be more and more in the way of opening up to the internet and the flow of information because I think the younger generation will demand that in their life, in order to maintain creativity and innovation and to make their dreams come true, that there be more access to information increasingly. Thank you.

Question: Good afternoon, Mr. Huntsman. My name is Sofia, a journalist from Common Talk Weekly, the only bilingual newspaper in Fujian Province. Here I have one question for you.

We know that you have long been considered as a potential candidate for the 2012 president election in the United States, but when President Obama nominated you as the Ambassador to China, was it difficult for you to choose between being a political star within the United States and coming to China as a bridge who could foster a better understanding between the two countries? Or you didn't have a choice? Thank you.

Ambassador Huntsman: 最大的就是给你的国家一些服务。8个月以前, 欧巴马总统打电话

给我。那个时候我做犹他州州长。我是共和党（人），奥巴马总统是民主党（人），是不同的党派。他说你愿不愿意跟我谈一谈，有关你到中国去做大使（的事）。我说我愿意跟你谈。后来我就到华盛顿D.C.去，在白宫里面跟他谈。我们两个人，还有我夫人。他说，在美国政治是很重要的，可是有的时候有的事情比政治还重要。他说，这个中美关系就是全世界最重要的一个关系。这个中美关系就是比政治还重要的（事）。我的回答就是我跟你完全同意。不管我是Republican或是Democrat，我们都是觉得一样，中美关系就是比政治还重要的。所以我自己觉得，美国州长的话，很重要的，我很喜欢做这个工作。可是我觉得中美关系是最重要的关系，因为我们这个世界上的障碍，不管是经济或者是和平方面，都是有关中美关系。如果有一个很好的中美关系的话，全世界都会有benefit。所以我就很愿意给我的国家一些服务。这是一个很简单的决定，很容易的决定。我还可以回来做别的事情。可是我现在不是做政治，我只是做国家的服务而已。谢谢。

[Translation: The most important thing is to serve your country. Eight months ago, President Obama gave me a phone call. I was the Governor of Utah at that time. I'm a Republican, and President Obama is a Democrat. (We belong to) different Parties. He asked me whether we can have a talk regarding my serving as the Ambassador to China. I said I'd like to have a talk. Later I went to Washington D.C. and had a conversation with him at the White House. The two of us, and my wife. He said that politics is important in the United States, but sometimes there are things more important than politics. He said that the Sino-US relationship is something that is more important than politics. My reply was that I totally agreed. It doesn't matter whether I'm a Republican or Democrat. Both of us believe that the Sino-US relationship is something more important than politics. So I think that the job of being a US governor is important and I enjoyed doing that job. But I also think that the Sino-US relationship is the most important relationship, because issues in this world, no matter the economy or world peace, are all related to this relationship. If there's a good Sino-US relationship, the whole world will benefit from it. So, I'm very glad to serve my country. This is a simple decision, an easy decision. I can go back and do some other work (in the future). But currently I'm not doing politics. I'm just serving my country. Thank you.]

Question: I'm from Xiamen Daily. I notice that since the 9th U.S. President of the United States started sending ambassadors to China, I wonder which number you are in the list of all the ambassadors to China. And also, each ambassador has a different style of work in some ways. I wonder during your term, Mr. Ambassador, what is something special that you might want to do differently than other ambassadors have done to [inaudible] accomplished by Ambassador Huntsman?

Ambassador Huntsman: That's a very good question. The first envoy was sent by the 10th American President, John Tyler. Tyler took the place of President McKinley who was the 9th President who had a very short presidency. He gave a very long speech for his inauguration, it was about 2,500 words long, two and a half hours, and he got very sick and he died about 31 or 32 days later.

So because President McKinley went to the same college that I did, the University of Pennsylvania, I've read about his career and I learned the very important lesson in politics that you

should never speak for too long. [Laughter]

So the Vice President at the time, John Tyler, became the 10th United States President. He appointed the first U.S. envoy to China whose name was Caleb Cushing. The most important thing that Caleb Cushing did was to negotiate the Treaty of Wang Xia which was patterned a little bit after the Treaty of Nanjing which was negotiated by the British after the first opium war. Of course Xiamen was a part of the Treaty of Wang Xia. When I say that this has historic roots, being here in Xiamen, the very first American envoy made it possible for U.S. engagement here in Xiamen.

I don't know that I bring any special approach or capabilities as ambassador, but I do bring a great interest and a great affection for China and a desire for as many people in America as possible to better understand China, and for as many people here in China to understand America.

So my hope perhaps more than before is to get out of Beijing and to get out to many parts of China and to speak to many different groups, either by the media or in person, to let them know that America is a very compassionate, kind country that cares deeply about the well being of the world. I know China is the same way.

When you look at what both our countries are doing in Haiti where a terrible tragedy has occurred and I express great condolences to the Chinese people on the eight Chinese citizens who were killed recently in Haiti. But when the world is in need, the United States helps. When the world is in need, China helps. These are two countries who are super powers who understand, and China increasingly understands the responsibility inherent with being a major power of the world.

So I hope that when I am gone that people here in China can say that ambassador helped us to better understand the unique nature of the United States. And because of that, I feel better about the future. Thank you.

Question: I noticed recently Time Magazine selected Chinese workers as a group to be the person of the year for 2009. I also know that on your schedule, Mr. Ambassador, you're going to be having a meal tomorrow with some of the migrant workers. I wonder what is on your considerations [inaudible], and what sort of message you would intend to send as a result of this?

Ambassador Huntsman: Thank you for the question. When I mentioned a moment ago that my hope is to get out to a lot of different groups and to better understand the different aspects of life in China, that's exactly what I'm going to try to do tomorrow, because it will be the first time I've ever had an opportunity to sit down with a group of migrant workers. It's not important what I have to say. I want to listen. I want to hear what they have to say so I can better understand their plight and their circumstances and what the economy has meant, the very very successful economic growth recently in China, what that has meant to many of these migrant workers. So I don't think they'll learn a lot from me, but I think I'll learn a lot from them.

Question: Mr. Ambassador, welcome to Xiamen. I'm sure as Ambassador to China you should read a lot of newspapers, but I think most of them are national newspapers. But if you want to know the real China as you first come to Fujian or to Xiamen, maybe I can recommend why you

not choose local newspaper to read like ours, a Common Talk Weekly, the only bilingual newspaper in China. Thank you.

Ambassador Huntsman: The great thing about a free press is that you get lots of different perspectives, you get local newspapers and local perspective, you get national perspectives, and in the United States we have a multiplicity of opinions and sources of those opinions, and I love reading local newspapers and I love reading national newspapers. But in China, you're right, I do need to read more local newspapers. Thank you for the recommendation.

Question: Yes, I bring along.

Ambassador Huntsman: Thank you very much.

Consul General Brian Goldbeck: On the issue of local newspapers, we at the consulate do receive local newspapers and read them. We send summaries of those to Beijing to the Ambassador's attention. We can't obviously read all the papers across the four provinces that we cover, being Fujian, Guangdong, Jiangxi and Hainan.

I also wanted to thank the Ambassador for visiting three of those four provinces including Fujian, Guangdong and Hainan. He literally has just come from Hainan and so has not had an opportunity to meet with the press for a few days, and so in a sense you are part of the truth cycle because you heard of his first expression of grief and condolences today for those peacekeepers who died in Haiti. So you are part of the truth cycle of passing good information on to the public, just as you are about dispelling myths or misunderstandings.

For example, it's common misunderstanding in China that students can't get visas when in fact the truth is 85 percent of undergraduate students who apply for visas to the United States from China are approved, and 90 percent of the graduates. So there is a myth, there is a misunderstanding that you can help to correct as the press. This is an example of just how important you are about the flow of information your role in the flow of information.

The consulate maintains a very vigorous program in Fujian. We're eager to meet with the press and to meet with all the elements of Fujian to try to get a better understanding, but having the Ambassador visit is just a superb opportunity for him to get a first-hand look at the magic and the special qualities of Xiamen. Thank you.

Ambassador Huntsman: Thank you, Brian.

I'm going to take back my one comment that I don't read enough local press because Brian is correct. On my Blackberry every day, I don't think of it like this but I get summaries of stories from all over the country that our public affairs section prepares, and I read them all the time without even realizing that they're all from local newspapers.

So I stand corrected. I do read more local press, local stories than I imagined.

Question: That is a good part to know that ordinary Chinese citizens. I think it is a good choice.

Ambassador Huntsman: 我们非常感谢你们每一位到这儿来跟我们在一起。我们(占)用你们宝贵的时间。非常感谢你们。将来我们希望有更多的机会与你们谈一谈。下次我们就可以讲一些福建话。(笑) [Translation: We appreciate each of you being here with us. (Thank you) for your precious time. Thank you very much. We hope we'll have more chances in the future to talk with you. Next time we may talk in some Fujian dialect. (Laughter)]