

'Sharp' References

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President Nixon appeared to make several sharp references to the Watergate scandal Tuesday night in a toast greeting Japan's Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka at a formal White House state dinner designed to mend fences between the two economic powers.

Without citing Watergate by name, Mr. Nixon said, "We are competitors and that is good . . . But we are total friends and cooperators in working for peace. So let others spend their time on small, vicious, murky, unimportant, little things. We will spend our time building a better world."

At another point, he said that while Americans have faults, they should "build" with their "emotional and intellectual resources," not be distracted by "the petty, little, indecent things that seem to obsess us as time goes by."

The President wound up his toast by saying, "We should build a better world and not be dissipated in things that don't matter."

Prime Minister Tanaka responded to Mr. Nixon's remarks through an interpreter, citing "the strong bond of friends who band together to weather every storm." He did not refer to the President's domestic difficulties.

Not all of the guests felt that President Nixon was referring to the Watergate when he spoke of "small and vicious things." Sen. Warren G. Magnuson (D-Wash.), chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, looked puzzled when questioned about it and said, "I didn't get any reference to the Watergate in those remarks at all."

George Bush, chairman of

the Republican National Committee and former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, looked equally puzzled.

"I thought the President was referring to small and petty differences which used to divide the United States and Japan," said Bush.

Earlier, President and

Mrs. Nixon greeted the prime minister at the North Portico as he arrived for the black-tie evening that included a formal dinner and entertainment by opera singer Roberta Peters.

Economic relations, and tensions, between Japan and the United States are the key item on the agenda for Tanaka's visit. Even Tuesday night's news coverage, with many of the White House photographers' corps using Nikon cameras, a highly regarded Japanese export, seemed to underscore Japan's emergence as a world economic contender.

Among Tuesday night's guests were representatives of several American business titans, including Ford, General Motors, Goodyear, General Electric and Lockheed Aircraft Corp.

The President, in his remarks after the sit-down dinner, mixed his Watergate comments with several references to world trade.

Noting that Japan and the United States between them produce more than 40 per cent of the goods in the world, the President said, "We should be working together, not against anybody else, working for peace and prosperity."

"After our short time on this great world stage, what do we leave really? The memory only of the battles we fought, the opponents we did in, the viciousness we created, or do we leave possibly not only the dream

but the reality of the new world."

Since protocol forbids a head of state to toast a prime minister, the President raised his glass to the house of Hirohito, the emperor of Japan. Tanaka, in turn, raised his glass to the President's health and to the people of the United States.

Miss Peters' appearance in the East Room for the Nixons' guests, plus an additional 110 after-dinner invitees, marked a fresh approach to White House entertainment for visiting dignitaries.

A shift in the choice of entertainers was made recently after some dissatisfaction, including Mrs. Nixon's, was discreetly made

known about the Hollywood flavor of the performers. Such performers have included the Carpenters, singer Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr. and most recently Tony Martin.

President Nixon made a special point of introducing Miss Peters in the East Room by saying she was one of the few White House performers asked back for a repeat performance. He said that she had sung for British Prime Minister Harold Wilson three years ago.

"We felt it was appropriate after she had sung for the prime minister of the great island nation of the Atlantic to invite her back to sing for the prime minister of the great island nation of the Pacific."

At the end of her operatic recital, Miss Peters received a resounding ovation. Amateur lip-readers could see quite clearly that First Lady Pat Nixon was saying to Miss Peters on stage, "Beautiful, simply beautiful."

The President was apparently so pleased that he announced he would break precedent and invite Miss Peters back for a third

White House concert.

The President also pointed out to his guests that they might spot 12 unknown faces among the audience. "These are very important faces," said the President. "These are the faces of the 12 people from Bethesda Naval Hospital who kept me in bed for a week." He was referring to a recent week-long bout with viral pneumonia.

Dr. Henry Kissinger, the President's chief foreign policy adviser who usually sneaks out before the after-dinner entertainment, stayed on this time. "I didn't want anybody to think I don't appreciate Japan or good music, too," he said.

The dinner menu bypassed any beef shortage that may exist at the White House. It had been reported earlier Tuesday that the White House, like many housekeepers, couldn't find any filet mignon on the market. So they served roast duck instead. Dinner began with salmon and proceeded to roast duck with wild rice and broccoli, with bibb lettuce salad, and wound up with a dessert that looked like old-fashioned blanc mange with chocolate sauce.