

'I have a hunch we'll return'

Japanese businessmen tour C.O.

By Gene Barton
Bulletin Staff Writer

Five visitors from Japan, with an eye on investment in Oregon, were treated Wednesday to many of the industrial sites, scenes and weather patterns Central Oregon has to offer.

The Japanese businessmen, one of four groups from Keidanren, the Federation of Economic Organizations in Japan, currently touring Oregon and other parts of the United States, arrived at the Redmond airport at about 11:30 a.m.

They were whisked through a tour of the Tektronix facility in Redmond, the Shevlin Center in Bend, lunch with area leaders and a press conference and tour in Sunriver before flying to Hillsboro at 4 p.m.

During their whirlwind tour, the businessmen, who represented Sony, Kikkoman, the Industrial

Bank of Japan, Nippan Express Ltd. and Keidanren, were pelted by rain, snow and wind, with a little sunshine thrown in.

Delegations from Keidanren are touring 11 states viewed as possible locations for investments. At the behest of Gov. Vic Atiyeh, members of the group visited Oregon in 1984, prompting the repeal of the state's unitary tax. This time around, the group came on its own.

Naozo Mabuchi, managing director of Sony, said Oregon is looked at in Japan as one of the best places for investment. He cited the attitude of Atiyeh, business people and citizens to "welcome Japanese investment irrespective of competition," a good labor force and ease of transportation to and from Japan and other Asian countries as factors in Oregon's favor.

Mabuchi noted that six or

seven Japanese companies have moved into Oregon since the repeal of the unitary tax and said "this number will increase, I hope rapidly."

Kazuo Nukazawa, director of the International Affairs Department of Keidanren, said the group found Central Oregon's advantages to include quality of water, a low cost of living and low prices for land, especially compared with Portland and California.

"We may find more points if we stayed longer," Nukazawa said. "I have a hunch that we will return."

Mabuchi said the goal of the Keidanren tour is not to study the possibility of Japanese investment in the United States, but to expand it. He called Japanese investment in this country "one of the best ways" to solve trade problems between the two countries and

exchange technology.

Mabuchi noted that Japan invested almost \$10 billion overseas last year, with about \$3.5 billion going to the United States. That amount is expected to increase as the high dollar constricts Japan's trade surplus.

Nukazawa said the Japanese television series "From Oregon with Love," which was filmed in Central Oregon, has given the state and the region a high degree of visibility compared to other areas.

Nukazawa, who said his wife and daughter were fans of the show, said awareness of Oregon jumped from 10 percent to 70 percent because of it.

He said the Japanese learned that people in Oregon are very receptive and friendly to foreign nationals and that recognition makes Central Oregon an attractive site for investment.