



**A SPANISH SPEAKER** hoses down the production line at Taylor Shellfish. Once the place was clean the delegation of Australian dignitaries seen in suits and ties was given a tour of the plant by Bill Dewey, the company's director of communications.

# Australians hear pearls of wisdom about oysters

By SEAN HANLON

A handful of young leaders from Down Under visited Mason County on Friday and got the lowdown on the sex life of the Pacific oyster.

Bill Dewey gave his Australian guests a tour of the Taylor Shellfish plant on Lynch Road south of Shelton while the bands played on and Spanish speakers on the company payroll scrubbed down the production line and moseyed through the ice fog emanating

from the freezer.

The Aussies huddled in a darkened room while Dewey treated them to a slide show about Taylor's business and the company's sound system piped in tunes by AC/DC and Fountains of Wayne, the first being an Australian band and the second the guys who brought you "Stacey's Mom," a song about a guy who is madly in love with his girlfriend's mother.

Taylor has an annual payroll

of \$10 million and is the second largest employer in Mason County, with much of the digging and shucking done by newcomers from south of the U.S. and Mexican border. "Most of those shellfish products are sold elsewhere in the country and elsewhere in the world so they bring money into these rural economies," Dewey said.

**HIS PRESENTATION** recalled milestones in the history of  
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# Aussies take tour of Taylor Shellfish

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the shellfish industry in Washington: Taylor established as a family business in 1890; passage of the Bush and Callow acts in 1895 that began the process of putting state tidelands into private hands after intensive shellfishing had depleted stock of the wild Olympia, a fragile member of the oyster family which is native to these parts; and introduction of the Pacific oyster in 1921.

The Pacific was not so susceptible as the Olympic to hot and cold extremes of temperature, but there was one problem with the transplanted species: "Seed was an issue," Dewey told the group. "It grows very well here, but it doesn't reproduce well."

This being the case, Taylor was obliged to import Pacific oyster seed until the company established a hatchery on Hood Canal. The dynamics of this enterprise owe much to female fecundity, it being the case that a single female oyster can produce up to 80 million eggs.

On a somewhat less lascivious note, Dewey told the visitors that Taylor is the largest shellfish company in the state and talked about its recent acquisition of another family-owned company in British Columbia. "We're scattered from Alaska to California on the West Coast of the United States," he said. "We're a very important employer in rural areas."

**THE NINE-MEMBER** del-

egation of Australian dignitaries included a number of elected officials. Their visit was sponsored by the American Council of Young Political Leaders and consisted of meetings which focused on conservation, corporate social responsibility, housing, technology and sustainable management of natural resources.

Delegates included Jaye Radisich, a member for Swan Hills of the Parliament of Western Australia; Zed Seselja, a member for Molonglo of the Parliament of the Australian Capital Territory; Bradley Henderson, state director for Queensland of the National Party of Australia; and Holly Byrne, a member of the Liberal Party and an advisor to the Federal Minister of Immigration and Citizenship.

The tour of the Taylor Shellfish plant was wedged between a meeting with Governor Christine Gregoire and dinner at Xinh's, a restaurant in Shelton which is managed by Xinh Dwelley, a world-class cook and five-time West Coast oyster-shucking champion. During their four-day stay in Washington, the group also toured the Microsoft campus and the Space Needle and had meetings with Secretary of State Sam Reed and Nancy Keith, executive director of the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust.

The American Council of Young Political Leaders is a bipartisan and nonprofit educational organization.