

Eiken Grade 1 2016-1A

No. 1 Does the government spend taxpayers' money wisely?

I do not believe that the government is spending money sensibly. I would like to mention three ways that I feel that Japanese government spending is unwise. First, as a percentage of GDP, Japan has more debt than any other advanced country. In fact, the current debt is well over twice Japan's annual GDP. The current level of spending cannot be maintained without raising taxes, which would cause hardship on individual taxpayers and corporations. Moreover, as the Japanese population ages, spending on social welfare will only increase while the number of younger workers who pay taxes will decrease. Therefore, government debt will continue to increase. Second, the Japanese government has spent too much to stimulate the economy and to keep interest rates low. Some of the money used to stimulate the economy goes to construction and highway projects that are unnecessary. Spending on wasteful projects has to stop. Finally, the Japanese government is wasting money on itself. There are too many government agencies and bureaucrats. The government needs to become more efficient by reducing the number of agencies, waste and corruption. For these reasons, I believe the government needs to rethink spending in order to use the taxpayers' money in better ways.

No. 2 Agree or disagree: Urbanization has gone too far.

I agree that urbanization has gone too far in many places around the world. Let me explain why I feel this way. Over 50 percent of the world's population now lives in urban areas and this trend will only get worse this century. Some large urban areas like Tokyo in Japan have handled growth fairly well. However much of the current urbanization is happening in developing countries. This is troubling because this rapid growth often occurs in medium-sized cities which do not have the resources to handle it. Because much of this growth is unplanned, many problems occur. For example, there is a lack of housing, sanitation, transportation options, schools, and other such basic needs required by urban residents. Many cities are overwhelmed with pollution and their streets are filled with vehicles that cannot move during rush hours. Many of the poorer farmers or laborers who have moved from the countryside to cities do not have the skills necessary to make a living in their new urban homes. Governments in developing countries cannot keep up with this flow of people into urban centers. These are the reason I believe that urbanization is too often out of control.

No. 3 Is religion losing its relevance in the 21st century?

I do not believe religions is losing its relevance, even though many young people choose not to go to churches, temples or mosques. I would like to present three reasons why I believe religion is still relevant. First, the teachings and moral messages of the great religious leaders are timeless. They are as true in the 21st century as they were at the time these religious leaders lived. People need to spend time studying religions and considering how the messages apply in their lives in the present world. Second, people have become too busy and too materialistic. To support their ends and wants, people have to work hard. Belonging to a particular religion means taking time out from one's hectic life to think about deep and important questions. We can gain a better perspective and perhaps realize that having so many material things is not so important. Finally, people belonging to a church organization often do very good things for their communities and even the wider world. They often volunteer their time and money to help those in need. While many people are cynical about religions and point out negative things about different religions, its influence has been positive overall. I believe religions is still important in the 21st century.

No. 4 Can the human race live in harmony with the natural world?

I do not believe the human race is capable of living in harmony with the natural world. There are three reasons I feel this way. First, the world is now going through a major extinction period, I believe the sixth major extinction. It is the first major extinction that is caused by one species, which is the human race. Other extinctions have been caused by such natural events as asteroids striking the earth, volcano eruptions and climate change. This is clear evidence that humans are causing major damage to the natural world. Second, although strong and rapid actions need to be taken by humankind to prevent such disasters as global warming, nations are not able to reach meaningful agreements. The limited agreements that are made may not require immediately meaningful steps to stop the destruction of our natural environments, and therefore lack effectiveness. Finally, population is continuing to grow, especially in developing and undeveloped nations. And as large numbers of people in developing countries become wealthier, their demand for natural resources grows, causing even greater damage to the world environment. For all these reasons, I believe that humans are harmful to the natural world and that this will not change in the future.

No. 5 Is transferring technology to developing nations the key to economic development?

I believe that transferring technology to developing nations is vital in terms of economic development. It is a more effective way to provide assistance. I would like to give a few examples of how technology transfers can boost economic development and improve overall quality of life. First, technology is important for education purposes. Students can gain a lot of information from the Internet. Internet technology can dissolve boundaries by providing students in developing nations with the same resources utilized by those in developed nations. Furthermore, students increase their chances for future employment by learning to use various kinds of technology. Second, technology makes work of all kinds more productive whether in the office or at factories. For example, daily operations that were once time-consuming or dangerous could be optimized by automating workflow processes. Third, the companies of developing nations will become more competitive globally if they are provided with technology. This technological know-how will lead to innovative creation, which could eventually help these companies get one step ahead of their competitors in the global market. With cooperation between nations, technology transfers can have a positive impact on education, productivity, and competitiveness. These three factors are the way to boost economic development.