

INDIFFERENT YOUTH, BE AMBITIOUS!

Rie Nomura
Kwansei Gakuin ESS

Are you satisfied with present Japanese politics? If your answer is no, do you think that you can change the present situation by yourself? Most of you may think, "I cannot change it, I give up, " even if you have one easy way to change the present situation. What is the way? That is "casting a vote." These days, a lot of people give up voting. They throw a good chance away. Today, I am standing here in an attempt to break through the shell of indifference toward voting and to show my idea about reviving the present voting system. Through this speech, I would like to say, "INDIFFERENT YOUTH, BE AMBITIOUS!"

In fact, as all of you know, the Japanese voting rate, especially for young people is low. According to the Yomiuri Newspaper, on September 8th 2002, the average Japanese voting rate is 50% and only 20% of the people around 20 year-of age go to the election. This April, I had the chance to work in part time job related to the election. I was very sad that I could find few young people at the polling station. Moreover, one of the people who belong to the board of elections said to me "In the more than 5 years I have been here. I have hardly seen any young people vote."

A lot of my friends also do not go to the election. Their reasons are very simple and they shocked me. "I do not go to the election because nothing will change." "I do not believe in the bright future, because of the present political corrupt." "I do not know anything about the candidate and I think irresponsible voting is worse than not voting at all, so I do not go to the election. . . ." I would like to ask that is it really OK? I cannot agree with these reasons. So, let us think about the purpose of elections.

If we do not go to the election, what might happen? To leave everything to politicians leads to the corruption of political ethics. For example, some of the politicians waste our tax money. According to the Sankei Newspaper in 2000, the Japanese government spent one hundred sixty billion yen to make a port in Hokkaido. But presently, at most, one ship uses that port a day. Such cases occurs all over the country without noticing. And yet, it is often said that in the future our generation will not receive pensions. We have a heavy burden. However we cannot complain about it. Because not going to the election means not "the relinquishment of rights," but "acceptance."

For the people who think, "By voting, nothing will change," I would like to show a good example by mentioning a good reformist governor. He is Masayasu Kitagawa, the former governor of Mie Prefecture. After he was elected, he avoided waste as much as possible. Thanks to his work, Mie prefecture dramatically changed.

Whether your city or country is revived or not depends on the person who is elected by you. You should elect the person that you can trust. If you don't know about elections, you should study it. I strongly believe that if you think nothing will change, change will never occur.

Elections are a wonderful chance to engage in politics. I would like to ask you again, "Are you satisfied with present Japanese politics?" If your answer is no, then "Do you think that you want to change the present situation?" "Who changes the world?" I think that is you. "So how?" Then I would like you to say, "Let's go to the election." Going to an election is the first step to changing the present Japanese political system. If all of you take action, major change will occur.

How can we change the low voter turnout? I would like to share my idea with you. That is candidates should offer a forum for voters, especially youth, on the Internet. Each candidate should post his or her policy and career on a web site. Then all of you can contact the candidate and show him or her your ideas and ask any questions you might have by sending e-mail. And they should spread information about the site by putting the URL on the election board so that all of you can easily find the site. In fact, Sweden, which has a high voter turnout, uses this system. There are a lot of advantages to it. You can easily access the site anytime and anyplace even if you are busy. By asking your questions and expressing your ideas, you can get to know the candidate even better, and get interested in him or her. And you can realize that you have participated in politics. Moreover, for candidate, the Internet is an effective way to appeal to potential voters. So, I think we need this system.

Are you satisfied with present Japanese politics? Do you hope that your hometown or country will become better? If so, I want you to think that you can change the present situation by yourselves. The easiest way is by "casting a vote!" I think that if you think nothing will change, change will never occur. Now is the time to take action. "INDIFFERENT YOUTH, BE AMBITIOUS!"