

THE JAPAN SCIENTISTS' ASSOCIATION

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Aggravated academic research and the crisis of university

The Liaison Conference for studying peace and democracy held a symposium “Aggravated academic research and the crisis of university” on 24 February 2019 in Tokyo.

First report: “Criticism of policies concerning academic research – we need the cooperation between researchers and citizens” by Dr. Ihara, secretary general of JSA. The JSA has inaugurated “Forum for getting rid of the crisis of university and carving out its future”, as a place to ask and think about what university should be in concert with citizens beyond installation mode, so as to overcome the crisis of university such as cutback in the basic expenses, research-and-education weakened by imposition of reform through fiscal policy, and distorted educational equal opportunity and public burden to higher education. As he pointed out, the R&D in Japanese policy of science and technology has been focused on the development for business community, and the science and technology policy and university policy proposed by financial circles, progressed since the 2001 inauguration of Council for Science and Technology Policy, Cabinet Office and Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, have laid disproportionate emphasis on investments and resource allocation to seven strategic fields. As to that system, Ihara showed a diagram of Japanese academic research system that successive technocrats has controlled academia, clarifying the obstinacy of the university crisis.

Second report: “Issue point of the privatization of national universities and new dimension of university ‘reform’ ” by Prof. Sato (ex-pres. Shizuoka Univ.). National universities were privatized as university version of administrative and financial reforms and the streamlining of administrative. The separation between administration and teaching and research, management by objective, and top-down governance were brought into universities. The privatization was put into execution as one of Premier Abe’s growth strategies, that is, capturing and mobilizing intellectual resources of universities. Those mean the *straight* strategies from basic research to social implementation and international expansion, which was denoted *integrated innovation strategy* in fictional “Society 50”: productivity of research, external funds expansion, and restructuring and integration of university and so on. The professor raised a question on the principal keywords shared between “the grand design of higher education toward 2040” (Central Council for Education’ report) and “a future of national universities in higher education” (National University Association). He warned that research ability, financial base, and development of young researchers lag behind worldwide, and appealed to the participants for cooperation with citizens to secure university as public facility standing against “university reformation” implemented by the Abe cabinet, out of step with the line, and encouraged to overcome sense of stagnation and helplessness.

In a comprehensive discussion coordinated by Prof. Ozawa (Jikei University School of Medicine), Prof. Tahara (Utsunomiya Univ., coauthor of “Investigation of national university corporation and responsibility of university” with Prof. Ozawa) says, we must get back bottom-up basic research by the side of citizens though hopeless atmosphere prevails in university. A retired junior high-school teacher claimed that it is mysterious to require corresponding to unpredictable society, innovation must be realized basing on experience and scientific reasoning, while another one said, competency Central Council for Education calls on is not character building, critical literacy should be required to students.

The university forum, the first symposium

“Forum to Overwhelm the University Crisis and to Open up Tomorrow” for the purpose of carrying over discussions on the university’s present and future has established by 51 callers.

The first symposium was held on March 31, 2019 at Meiji University Global Hall. There were 188 participants, and the venue was almost full.

At the beginning of this symposium, Prof. Hirowatari (prof. emeritus, Tokyo Univ.) who is a member of the calling party, explained the purpose of the forum, and then four reports were given. Prof. Kajita (Univ. Tokyo) firstly presented a report entitled “For the sustainable development of basic science”. He outlined the current state of basic science in Japan, pointed out the importance of research funds for bottom-up, and mentioned that universities have fallen into a negative spiral of ameliorating the negative effects of “university reform” through further “reform”.

He summarized that the experiment that “Even if the research fund would be reduced, the competition raises the research power” has failed. Furthermore, he pointed out that the enhancement of higher education requires the expenditure of public funds, and it is important to have society understand that basic science aims to contribute to broaden the horizon of human knowledge.

Prof. Inose (Konan Univ.) presented the next report titled “The Future of University, Characteristics, Individuality, and Autonomy”

She said that the “university reform” that the government aims are “reform” that has been given without choice. Although the government is emphasizing the individuality and independence of the university, rather it leads to the standardization of the university.

In order to recover the trust of the university, it was necessary to disseminate what was lost in the “reform,” and for that purpose she mentioned that the role of teachers and researchers in the humanities and social sciences is important.

Next, Mr. Yamamoto, former president of Wakayama University, gave a presentation on the current situation of regional national universities and the direction of reform that should have been made. He clarified how “reform” proposed by the government conflicts with the existence significance of regional national universities based on his experience of the president and emphasized the function to guarantee equal opportunities of education and lifetime learning in regional national universities.

Finally, Prof. Yamaguchi (Tokushima Univ.) presented a report entitled “Can the university improve if it competes?” While he introduced his own book, he pointed out that the “competitive

policy” is not a competition, but a “document review” based on indicators that are not directly related to education or research. He raised a question as to whether it is correct to recognize that the state of Japanese universities is bad, which is the premise of “university reform.” The reason of the incorporation of national universities was not the decline in research power, but the apparent reduction in the number of government officials. He also criticized the Cabinet’s and Ministry of Finance’s view that “the delay in reform is the cause of the decline in the number of papers” is logically impossible because the decline in the number of papers was a phenomenon that occurred after “university reform.”

He then introduced the negative effects of “competitive policy” and argued that “competitive policy” would be effective if the competition aiming the plus alpha when the basic budget is guaranteed.

ACTIVITIES OF RESEARCH COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

The JSA headquarters organizes a number of research committees and groups undertaken on a nationwide scale, which are encouraging the members across the country

1) THE ACTIVITIES OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE OF FOODSTUFF PROBLEMS

The committee held a regular study meeting on 19 January 2019 inviting Mr. Iijima (representative director, Funabashi agricultural supply center, Chiba). The center has been established on June 1975 by seven agricultural producers aiming the supply of agricultural commodity direct from farm with personally identifiable information. They also aimed to realize “greens for Funabashi’s citizens from Funabashi’s fields” linking producers that wish a firm farming and consumers that wish safe greens. The center is active with the following ideas: 1) extending cooperation of producers and consumers, 2) protect and development of local and Japanese agriculture, and 3) contribution to build social and natural environments with sincerity and impartiality.

As he says, one of things that the center regards as most important is the criterion of safe and secure cultivation, for instance, growing vegetables using no chemical fertilizers nor agrichemicals in every way. That leads to ensuring safe foods for consumers as well as protecting the health of them. Thus the efforts of the center to bring out the natural function of the soil without relying on agrichemicals have been appreciated by Funabashi’s citizens.

There were yet pointed out the problems on agriculture and foods. The 2016 food self-sufficiency rate is 38%, and the average age of agricultural producers is 67. In the 1993 serious famine the abnormal climate in global-scale was recognized, at the same time lushness of domestic rice was realized again thanks for imported foreign rice. Owing to the 2017 continual rain 20,000 broccoli were completely destroyed. Considering those circumstances the center has started a project of real experience to learn the importance of securing agriculture and foods through exchanges between farmers and consumers. The center thus opened the 2009 rice paddy school, where learners experience to grow rice starting to build rice fields. They cultivated rice fields turned to wasteland, yielding fourteen bags of rice from 20 are paddy.

In the project of interchange, the problems facing such as well boring in a dry spell, weeding, and wild boars management have been resolved in cooperation, Iijima finally says.

2) ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE OF SCIENTISTS' RIGHTS

The most fruitful result of this year was to have held a session in 22 Comprehensive Scientific Study Convention, where substantial reports from various fields were delivered. Although regular committee has been held only one time this year according to the budget, a new pillar of activity and a new committee were decided. Universities and research institutes are in the status that the infringement of researchers' rights and positions shifts from individual cases to collective, large-scaled, and malicious ones, extremely result-based and competitive evaluation accelerates degradation of research ethics both in quality and in quantity. The national policy that leads universities and research institutes to military research causes the crisis of academic research. Considering committee's valuable results in the past and present status, we confirmed the following activities as key issues: (a) By virtue of JSA document "Report on right, position, and ethics" expound and spread the reports on infringement of rights and actual condition of ethics uploading those on website; (b) As to infringement of rights, considering the actual status changed from individual cases to more collective, share information and issues inside the JSA academic system section, and cope with them on both sides of policy and movement; (c) As to ethical problem, tackle unfair act in research and military research in relation to the sound development of science. Such issues are not radically solved by educating individual researchers or psycho-social care, but need a new viewpoint.

3) Activities of the Life and Medical Ethics Research Committee

JSA Life and Medical Ethics Research Committee

This research committee is composed of three members of natural sciences and six members of humanities (including two members of law). Among them, three are women, and I think we need to have more female members in the future.

One of the main activities is to set up a section meeting centered on members' study reports at the JSA General Academic Research Meeting. At the 22nd Meeting held in Okinawa in December last year, we set up a section meeting "problems of bioethics" where the following four reports were presented. "Novel prenatal diagnosis" "concept of eugenics before and after the war" "medical ethics education and elementary and junior high school moral education" and "value neutrality in bioethics and science". Please refer to the proceedings for details. Protection of human rights of individuals (patients) in medical care is the basic concern of this committee.

As a regular activity, "human ethics study meeting" is held annually. The recent case of application of genome editing technology on fertilized eggs to give birth to twin girls at a Chinese university was brought up at a meeting held at the central office of JSA on March 31 this year. We discussed the reality and limitations of genome editing technology and the danger of eugenic thought. We also discussed "principles of bioethics", "problems of making moral education a compulsory subject", "personal information protection and anonymization" and others.

JSA members concerned about bioethics, medical ethics, research ethics, etc. are cordially invited to join this study group. Whenever novel science and technology is developed, ethical problems always

arise. Would you care to think together about issues such as eugenic problems and protection of personal information that non-invasive prenatal genetic testing, genome editing and artificial intelligence bring about?
(Reported by KUROSU Mitsuyasu)

DISTRICTS' AND BRANCHES' ACTIVITIES

The JSA consists of 47 branches which are grouped into 9 districts, and they are independently and/or cooperatively carrying out their activities in addition to the headquarters' ones

1) LECTURE MEETING IN GIFU

The Gifu branch held a series of lecture meeting on January 22, 2019 in Gifu City, where Mr. Kondo (constitutional law, Professor Emeritus of Gifu University) was to give a lecture..

First, he introduced the constitutional amendment maneuvers and political state under the Abe administration, and described how to grasp and oppose “the addition of section 3 to Article 9 “. He also introduced a high school student who figured out “the addition of section 3” in 2005 and showed the result of attitude survey of the university students on the revision of Article 9. The result says that 70% of students were against the revision of Article 9, and 20% were in favor, on the other hand for the addition to Article 9, it was 30% in favor, 20% against it, and half was “able to be called neither”. These show that the addition to Article 9 is generally acceptable, and there is a risk that many votes will be blank vote, if this revision is put on a referendum.

Next, he pointed out that what action would be taken to prevent the amendment is to promote the ratification of Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the International Signature on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

In order to understand why these activities, it is necessary to look back on the origin of the Article 9 and the original intention. He introduced the testimony of former Governor of Gifu prefecture, Saburo Hirano who was an aide to Kijiro Shidehara (the former prime minister).

According to Mr. Hirano, the purpose of Article 9 is to “provide an example of giving up war and taking initiative to save human race from the annihilation by nuclear war”. In other words, the significance of Article 9 is the departure from the nuclear strategy and the abolition of nuclear weapons. The following comments were presented from the participants: “I was able to learn the principles of the Constitution.”, and “I was able to confirm again the principles of the Article 9 war abandonment.”

2) AGENT ORANGE RAW MATERIALS BURIED IN MOUNTAIN FORESTS THROUGHOUT JAPAN: INFORMATION DISCLOSURE AND CONSIDERATION OF COMPLETE DETOXIFICATION TREATMENT ARE URGENT ISSUES:

Regular meeting at Fukuoka Chapter of Kyushu Branch

A regular meeting of Kyushu Branch was held on January 15th, 2019, and NISHIGAKI Satoshi provided a topic entitled "Danger of 'Defoliant' approaching close to us.”

According to Aug 23, 2018, issue of The Nishinippon Shimbun and also to September 23 interpellation at Fukuoka Prefectural assembly by a member TAKASE Nahoko of Japan Communist Party, the fact that material of Agent Orange, the “defoliant”, is buried in forests owned by the Forestry Agency near the Fukuoka Prefecture Gokayama Dam (on the side of Yoshinogari Town in Saga Prefecture) where water supply system is also planned, has come to light.

The material is 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxy acetate (245T), manufactured at a chemical plant in Omuta, that contains dioxin and has become a problem.

The detailed history of 245T used by US military in the Vietnam Dead Leaves operation has been examined by HARADA Kazuaki (Truth of Japan’s Agent Orange (in Japanese), published by Satsuki Shobo, 2013). The 245T that found nowhere to go when the operation was decided to stop, the Forestry Agency abandoned the agents in mountain areas from Hokkaido to Kyushu. The speaker introduced burial information of 245T by referring also to the web site of the Tokyo group of anti-agrochemicals.

After reviewing the nature, toxicity, formation process etc. of 254T and 24D which are the raw materials of defoliant, and dioxins contained in them, he outlined ties among chemical warfare, corporations and states over defoliant and also history of international cartel. In the course of the lecture he showed two types of roles of scientists including university researchers, i.e., positive one to clarify the danger and the opposite one to deny it. Possibility of complete detoxification by recently advancing waste treatment technology was also discussed.

After the lecture, opinions were exchanged firstly on the necessity of information disclosure putting emphasis on the fact that the burial of herbicide (245T) used as the raw material of defoliant is largely unknown, and also on that future safety management and complete detoxification treatment should be widely discussed. (Reported by AKISADA Hideo)

3) “STRUCTURE” OF REPEATED DRUG INDUCED TRAGEDY-HPV VACCINE

The Okinawa Branch held a regular meeting on January 15 since August last year and the remaining work left behind the 22nd General Academic Research Meeting was also finished at the same time. WATANABE Yuko talked about the side effects of HPV vaccine which was reported also at the Academic Meeting.

HPV is a sexually transmitted virus, and infected women may develop cervical cancer. Vaccination of HPV vaccine was therefore encouraged for cancer prevention. In Japan, regular vaccination at public expense was introduced to women in 2013. However, it was soon switched to voluntary vaccination in response to repeated reports of side effects including severe cases, but public funding has been still maintained.

According to her report, the incidence rate of side effects is as high as 0.1% (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare), and patients develop serious symptoms such as severe dizziness, involuntary movements, memory disturbance, etc. often without gaining physicians’ support. Patients’ families are even blamed for fake sickness. Victims (or potential patients) are suffering from unacceptable pain as people consider it as a result of vaccination the patients received for a wild sex life.

Meanwhile, there is an alternative to cervical cancer prevention. Due to the mechanism of the vaccine, vaccination is meaningful only for girls before they start having sex, but aged women can also receive it if they wish. A research article on the side effects by Canadian researcher has been neglected. There are thus too many problems even aside from arguing about side effects.

The speaker is not a medical scientist but is a citizen journalist concerned about reality of the damage. Putting pieces of information together, she pointed out problems calmly and objectively, but not emotionally. She intended to create an explanatory website, she said.

She joined JSA in order to exchange information and to offer more scientific and persuasive information. We must respond to her intention. Although the participants on the day were only ten people, we would like to make effort to promote sharing information and activities through branch bulletins and publications.

References

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- 2) Katahira and Enoki, Proc.22nd General Academic Meeting, pp. 402-405,2018

(Reported by KAMEYAMA Norikazu and SENSUI Noburu)