

On the Dr. Yoshikawa's speech by Mr. Deguchi

At Dr. Kurokawa's celebration, the opening speech by Professor Hiroyuki Yoshikawa, the former President of the Science Council of Japan and of the University of Tokyo, had a deeply moving impact on the audience. My summary is slightly long, but please take a look below.

Professor Yoshikawa first congratulated Dr. Kurokawa on receiving the recent awards by AAAS and 'Foreign Policy', and explained that he was happy for three main reasons. The first is Dr. Kurokawa's achievements as Chairman of NAIIC: the compiling of the report, publishing the report in English, garnering global awareness and being evaluated highly by the world. In particular, Professor Yoshikawa pointed out Dr. Kurokawa's sharp critiques of the problematic tendencies of the mindset of Japanese and many Japanese organizations. Importantly, he brought to light the paradoxical problem of Japanese regulatory agencies being under the strong influence of the organizations which they were supposed to regulate.

Professor Yoshikawa's second reason is Dr. Kurokawa's outspokenness regarding Japanese society's unwillingness to change. Dr. Kurokawa has continuously over years, called for nurturing the nail that sticks out. He points out that the negative tendency for Japanese society to hammer down the "nail" or individual who stands out has caused Japan to lose its vitality. Professor Yoshikawa commended Dr. Kurokawa's courage to be critical of the universities and major corporations in Japan that have this tendency and consequently have fallen behind international standards.

The climax of the speech was Professor Yoshikawa's third reason, which moved the audience and seemed to resonate deeply with Dr. Kurokawa. In words as poetic as those of Haruki Murakami, he conveyed that Japanese scientists's need for empathy and a deep understanding of human nature.

Professor Yoshikawa began by saying that to merely congratulate Dr. Kurokawa based only on his first two reasons would not be enough. In his explanation, he offered an understanding of Dr. Kurokawa's character that revealed what lies beneath his sharp and critical intellect- the kindness and naiveté of his warm heart.

Simply being sharp is not enough for having a critical perspective- one must also have a kindness of heart like Dr. Kurokawa, who wonders if young people are kept back from reaching their full potential in the current social situation in Japan. Dr. Kurokawa notes that the economic growth of the 1980s and the stable progress of science and technology in the 2000s were

achieved at the cost of young people. It is his sensitivity and perceptiveness that underlies his empathy for young people and forms the foundation of his views.

After continuing for a while, Professor Yoshikawa paused, and choosing his words carefully, quietly asked, "What kind of future will our country have if it suppresses its own youth? This sincere and pressing question is a key driving force behind Dr. Kurokawa's perspective."

At this moment, the whole audience fell silent, in awe of Professor Yoshikawa's words. But world-class scientists do not forget to have a sense of humor. The room was filled with laughter when Professor Yoshikawa told the audience old stories of Dr. Kurokawa's sometimes bumpy transition in readjusting to Japanese society after returning from the U.S. He also congratulated Dr. Kurokawa and praised his recent speech at the University of Tokyo entrance ceremony.

It was a wonderfully crafted insightful speech. Professor Yoshikawa's credibility may come from his genuine interest in people and power of critical observations. It was a truly inspirational speech and a privilege to attend.