

ADDRESS

by Soedjatmoko

Rector, United Nations University

Awards Presentation
of Eisaku Sato Prize

International House
Tokyo, Japan

1 December 1980

The urge to vie for a prize is very old, probably as old as Homo Sapiens himself. It is probably no more than a softened and civilized translation of the Darwinian principle of the survival of the fittest. It is amazing the variety of ways that persons in the 20th century have found to compete against each other. People vie to be proclaimed the fastest, the prettiest, or even the fattest, the tallest, or the shortest.

Measuring one's intelligence against the other is also very much part of the contest picture of our days. It is true that there are many undesirable aspects to this competition, like the "entrance examination hell" which every Japanese youth must submit himself to to enter a university. But it is also undeniable that academic and literary contests have always fostered human creativity, sometimes raising it to the highest level. Jean Jacques Rousseau presented an entry to a literary contest organized by the Academy of Dijon in 1749 on the subject: "Has the progress of the sciences and arts contributed to the corruption or to the improvement of human conduct?". In his entry for the first time in his life he elucidated in a comprehensive form the theory of the intrinsic goodness of man in his natural state that he perfected later on in his essay on the "Origin of the Inequality of Men" (1754).

Today, we are just the followers of that splendid tradition of vying for intellectual excellence.

I am pleasantly surprised to see the quality of the entries to this contest. Miss Masako Tao has tackled the problem of World Hunger, which has been one of the priorities of the University, with an unusually deep and comprehensive view. Her analysis on the reasons why developed countries give food aid is most penetrating. She says in her essay that:

"There are three motives for providing assistance to meet the hunger problem in developing countries. One is political as is exemplified by the aid programmes of the United States, the Soviet Union and other countries which offer assistance as a means of expanding their spheres of influence. The second is economical, as is exemplified by the actions of Japan, West Germany and others seeking to establish export markets and to secure sources of raw materials. And the third motive is humanitarian, offering assistance on the basis of respect for human life, and this should replace the political and economical motives."

This is a reflection which the United Nations University must make its own.

The other three winners have analysed the problems of Future Development Strategies, Literacy in Developing Countries, and Education for Development. I was also impressed by their profound comments and observations.

Mr. Baba brings his study to the conclusion that "appropriate" development, meaning a kind of development that can be fully assimilated by the people, should be the guiding principle for the future. This echoes several of the subprogrammes of the University dealing with appropriate technologies, socio-cultural approaches to development, etc.

Mr. Nakajima rightly points out that literacy is one of the basic human rights, and his essay deals with this subject both from the theoretical point of view and its concrete realization in several Asian countries. Again I find here an echo of the University's studies on basic human rights, and I must add that Mr. Baba's paper has reminded us once more the need not to forget this important human right.

Finally, Mr. Watanabe writes as if he had attended one of our seminars on Education for Development, which is the subject matter of his essay. His distinction between "education for development", meaning education

aimed at the development of the country, and "development education", meaning informing people about the need and the processes of development, is wise and illuminating.

I wish to congratulate all the winners for the excellent quality of their contributions.

Before finishing my brief remarks, I wish to add that the United Nations University desires to participate more fully in the worldwide literacy contest scene. We are considering the possibility of selecting a few critical areas of study, mainly those with a greatest impact in the future of humanity, and offer substantial prizes to the best doctoral theses presented on these subjects. At present this is no more than a preliminary and vague idea, but it is an idea which all of us hope to bring to fruition in time.