

New Educational System Proposed

The Advisory Council on Education recently submitted a set of recommendations to the government denouncing postwar educational reforms for denying the merits of Japan's traditional culture and giving short shrift to moral education.

In fact, the report, submitted to Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone by Council Chairman Michio Okamoto after its approval at the 14th general meeting of the special commission on June 26, has little favorable to say about Japan's schools.


Calling for numerous reforms in the current system, it argues that students have been educated in a "uniform" and "inflexible manner," with little attention paid to their individual abilities and characteristics. Youngsters, it charges, have become very conscious of their "rights" without any corresponding awareness of their "obligations," a consciousness gap it blames on the postwar educational reforms.

The report stresses the importance of respecting and fostering students' individuality in the educational process, and calls for expanding opportunities for students to select schools of their choice against a backdrop of overall liberalization.

It further says that future reforms should be geared to nurturing a "spirit of love for the country" through revitalized moral education.

Among concrete proposals for correcting the excessive weight now placed on graduating from a big-name school in Japan's career-oriented society, the council urges companies and government agencies to stop judging applicants solely on the basis of their educational career, but to evaluate fairly their individual abilities when deciding on employment and promotion.

It further calls for abolishing the present standardized tests for admission to national and other public universities, and replacing them with new exam methods which reflect the nature of each university. The report concludes that the new exam system should be implemented freely as the universities see fit.



MITI Paper Calls for Expansion of Imports

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry released the 1985 White Paper on International Trade on June 18, calling on Japan to take concrete measures to expand imports of manufactured goods and to achieve


sustained economic growth by stirring up domestic demand.

The paper said that Japan should play a role commensurate with its standing as producer of 10% of the world's GNP in order to roll back the mounting pressures for protectionism caused by the swelling surpluses with its trading partners.

The paper also urged Japan to give foreign goods easier market access, step up its economic and technical cooperation, work for an early start of a new round of multilateral trade talks, ensure orderly export marketing and promote industrial cooperation.

While blaming an "overvalued" dollar as a major cause for Japan's trade surplus, it called for increasing the import of not only consumer goods but also machinery and parts, and promoting international division of labor so as to create more jobs in foreign countries.

To redress the trade imbalance, the paper also stressed the need for an expansion of domestic demand through improvement of housing, public roads, sewerage systems and other elements of social overhead capital.



Fiscal 1985 Capital Spending Seen to Gain 6.9%

Capital investment planned by private Japanese businesses in fiscal 1985 will increase 6.9% over the previous year to ¥13,216.7 billion (nearly \$55 billion) on a work basis, according to a report submitted on May 24 to MITI Minister Keiji Murata.

The report, prepared by the Investment Finance Committee of the ministry's Industrial Structure Council, said that investment by manufacturing industries will rise 11.8% over the previous year.


In the manufacturing sector, investment planned by basic-material industries will register a combined 9.2% year-to-year increase. Among such industries, investment by steelmakers will level off in fiscal 1985 as they have already completed large-scale investment while that by cement manufacturers will be smaller than the previous year.

Cheered by improved earnings, however, paper/pulp and petrochemical industries will spend more to rationalize their operations and to step up labor-saving efforts.

Processing and assembly industries such as electronics, electric machinery and automobiles will keep their investment at high levels, encouraged by increasing exports. They plan to invest 13.7% more than the previous year.

In the nonmanufacturing sector, overall investment growth will be a marginal 1.4% in fiscal 1985, with the electric power industry, which accounts for a major portion of private-sector investment, planning a 1.8% increase in capital spending.

MITI has pointed out that much of the planned equipment investment is being induced by technological innovation and increasing exports.



Overseas Investment

Finance Minister Noboru Takeshita submitted a report on May 29 to the Cabinet on Japan's overseas assets and debts as of the end of 1984.

According to the report, Japan's combined external assets, both official and private, totaled \$341.2 billion, while external debts amounted to \$266.9 billion, leaving net assets at \$74.3 billion.

The net asset figure was double the record level registered at the end of the previous year.


This came next to Britain's \$80.7 billion at the end of 1983. Japan is expected to overtake Britain this year as it continues to chalk up a large current account surplus.

Japan's external assets last year represented an increase of \$69.3 billion over the year before. The growth was mainly due to a 56% or \$31.4 billion year-to-year rise in Japan's private sector investment in attractive U.S. securities, which carried higher interest rates.

The total amount of investments in securities by the private sector accounted for 26% of Japan's total external assets, up from 21% the year before.

External lending by Japanese commercial banks rose \$11.3 billion or 39% over the previous year, reflecting the liberalization of yen-denominated lending abroad.

Last year's external debts represented a year-to-year increase of \$32.2 billion. Much of the gain was due to increased short-term borrowing made by Japanese banks in the overseas financial markets through their subsidiaries.



"Manpower Supply" Business to Get Legal Recognition

A bill to regulate "manpower supply" businesses was voted into law by the House of Representatives on June 11. The law will be enforced from July 1, 1986.

While legally recognizing the rapidly expanding business of supplying personnel to companies on a temporary basis, the law is aimed at controlling the business and thus protecting the rights of workers thus supplied. Such business is currently illegal under the Employment Security Law.

Manpower supply companies providing computer programmers and word processor operators have rapidly increased in the past few years in keeping pace with the in-

roduction of office automation and micro-electronics equipment.

This has brought with it an increasing number of troubles concerning working conditions for personnel provided by those companies. To cope with such problems, the Labor Ministry submitted the bill to the Diet (Parliament) in March.

Which jobs should come under the law will be determined by a Cabinet order to be set forth in accordance with recommendations by the Central Employment Security Council.

The Labor Ministry is considering giving secretaries, interpreters, computer programmers, office cleaners and 11 other occupations protection under the law.

Japan Trust

The Ministries of International Trade and Industry and Posts and Telecommunications have jointly established the Japan Trust for International Research Cooperation with the aim of using public trust funds to lure foreign researchers to Japan and encourage creative technological development.

The first public trust fund in Japan, the Japan Trust will contribute to international research cooperation with its invitation system similar to the Humboldt Foundation of West Germany and the National Health Institutes of the United States. Subscription of funds has already started at eight major Japanese trust banks.

The Trust expects subscriptions of ¥1,500 million (about \$6.2 million), which will be used to invite 10 foreign researchers. In the hope of inviting 100 foreign researchers annually in the future, the Trust is calling on economic organizations, business firms and individuals to cooperate in the project.

The researchers will be selected by the Basic Technology Research Promotion Center to be inaugurated in October.

The first group to be invited will be researchers in mining, electronic communications and other basic research fields. They will spend one year in Japan at the labs of private enterprises.

Eight Persons Honored On Trade Day

The International Trade Policy Bureau of MITI, in its commemoration of "Trade Day" on June 28, honored eight persons and 19 companies for their outstanding contributions to the expansion of Japan's manufactured imports.

The awarding of "Trade Honors," which has been carried out by the bureau since fiscal 1983, is aimed at easing frictions with

Japan's trading partners and achieving a balanced expansion of trade by promoting imports of manufactured goods.

A Prime Minister's citation is awarded to persons who have contributed to the promotion of manufactures imports and improved mutual understanding on trade. Companies which have helped expand Japan's manufactured imports get a MITI Minister's citation.

Prime Minister's citations were awarded this year to Zenjiro Asama, 73, president of Yachiyoda Sangyo Co.; Kotaro Takeda, 69, chairman of Nagoya Railroad Co.; Isao Nakauchi, 62, chairman of Daiei Inc.; Isao Yonekura, 63, president of C. Itoh and Co.; Taiichiro Matsuo, 75, chairman of Marubeni Corp.; Michael A. Jervis, 53, of Britain, vice president of Shell Kosan K.K.; Robert L. Sharp, 48, of the U.S.A., vice president and deputy manager of Manufacturers Hanover Trust Co. (Tokyo branch); and Y. H. Park, 69, of South Korea, chairman of Dainong Co.

The 19 companies which won MITI Minister's citations included Isetan Co., Ito-Yokado Co. and Yanase & Co.

International Design Festival

The second International Design Festival will be held at the International Exhibition Center in Osaka October 17-November 4 under the sponsorship of the Japan Design Foundation.

The 19-day festival will consist of three events: an international design competition, which the sponsor hopes will evolve into a design olympics; an international design award to honor persons or organizations that have contributed to the development of world design; and an international design exhibition featuring works by winners of the design competition, together with some of the most sophisticated designs from around the world.

More than 1,000 items from more than 40 countries were entered in the International Design Competition, the main attraction of the festival and the only international competition in the world covering all fields of design.

Out of the 68 works that passed the preliminary screening in February, West German Angela Knoop's "Electronic Fertility Controller" was awarded grand prize in July's final screening, decided by seven judges including internationally famous designer George Nelson. Ten other works were also awarded prizes.

The Japan Design Foundation was established to promote international exchange through design, from fashion to graphics and environmental design. Its chairman is Susumu Furukawa, president of the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Diplomatic Blue Book

An annual report on Japan's foreign policy issued by the Foreign Ministry July 2 calls for Japan to strive to make itself a genuinely "international state" open to the world "socially, economically, and psychologically."

The report, known as the 1985 Diplomatic Blue Book, emphasizes the need for Japan to assume responsibilities as a major world power and to strive to assimilate itself into international society, even if it entails some self-sacrifice.

The report recommends that Japan not only open its economy through opening its market to foreign imports and financial and capital liberalization, but also have tolerance and generosity toward things foreign, overcoming the insularity resulting from the homogeneity of its people.

The report praises the acceptance of Indo-Chinese refugees for resettlement as a first step toward a more open Japan.

It is the first time the Diplomatic Blue Book has set the realization of an "open Japan" as the primary task of Japan's foreign policy. The report also breaks new ground by calling for not only the opening of Japan's economy but also the transformation of the Japanese mentality.

All-Women Purchasing Mission

The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) will hold an exhibition of American and European household goods at department stores throughout the country beginning in late October as part of a campaign to promote imports of foreign goods.

Some 300 kinds of household utensils, interior goods, baby products and other goods will be displayed, including 199 selected by an all-women purchasing mission recently sent by JETRO to Paris, Milan and London. The rest are items recommended by working women in Europe and the United States.

The five-woman mission, headed by Kyoko Hirohashi, passenger coordinator for Japan Air Lines, was assigned the task of finding superior European goods that could contribute to better living.

Contrary to the impression of many Japanese that the cream of European products are already being imported, Hirohashi said mission members found numerous convenient and charming traditional European products which should find easy access to the Japanese market.