

Shifting Priorities

By Akira Yamagishi

MITI has published its "vision" for the 1990s: *International Trade and Industrial Policy in the 1990s*. With its three objectives and seven basic principles, the report indicates how MITI intends to lead the Japan of the 1990s into the 21st century.

Since its inauguration last November with the integration of government and private-sector trade unions, the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (JTUC-Rengo, called Rengo) has advocated a shift in priorities from economics and industry toward creating a society that puts the quality of life first. This shift must be grounded in the interests of consumers and all those who would gain from an enhanced quality of life. Rengo proposed the policies under the banner of "free time, prosperity and social equality." In this sense, the recently published MITI vision seems to be generally consistent with the goals of Rengo.

However, the big question is how these policies will actually be implemented. The specific policies cover a wide range of areas, yet only a limited range of problems can be solved by MITI on its own. All strata of society, including Rengo, are watching to see how the various other ministries and agencies will join forces to guide the Japan of the 1990s and how they will cooperate to gain a consensus among the people and to challenge sacred cows.

As a result of the lack of government leadership and rivalries among the ministries and agencies, no policies have been adopted to deal with the land problem, so that the price of land continues to skyrocket not only in the three largest metropolitan areas but also in cities in outlying areas. The gap between the haves and the have-nots continues to widen, and nothing has been done about shortening working hours and correcting the differential between Japanese and overseas prices. This situation certainly should not be allowed to continue.

It is obvious that Japan's various foreign and domestic problems cannot be solved without cooperation among government bodies, including cooperation between central and local governments. Pertinently, two of the seven basic principles outlined in the vision are "effecting

continuing internal reforms" and "enhancing cooperation among administrative bodies."

We hope that MITI will take decisive action to implement the policies outlined in the vision and will lead Japan toward a

wonderful society that puts people first in the 21st century. ■

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An athletic event for old people sponsored by Tokyo's Koto Ward.



Photo: Koto-ku Fukushi Kaikan Rengo

Techno-globalism And Dynamism

Mankind is on the brink of the most advanced technological revolution in history—a revolution that may ultimately call into question the supremacy of Western science and technology that have reigned undisputedly for the five centuries since Columbus. In a world ridden with techno-nationalism, this historical perspective lends new urgency to the call for techno-globalism.

Postwar Japanese technology strategies are destined to draw the spotlight in the 1990s as the military technology paradigm nurtured by the Cold War crumbles and the world moves toward a greater emphasis on consumer technology. This is an excellent opportunity for the proponents of techno-globalism. It is also significant that the "vision" has made pointed references to the need to solve the global environmental and energy resource problems.

This vision strikes a sensible balance in its calls for promoting pure science and basic technology side by side with a renaissance in manufacturing and specifically to halt the talent-drain away from manufacturing. The recommendations on preparing for the aged society are also most appropriate in light of the desire to maintain Japan's dynamism in the 21st century.

Finally, although the vision's three objectives and seven principles seem pretty much on the mark now, it is most important to remember that the world situation could change dramatically at any time and to remain eternally vigilant in monitoring progress and guiding the building for the better society that this vision promises.

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