

Eiken P1 Speaking Exercise 2009-3

1. Can the use of capital punishment be justified?

Capital punishment cannot be justified. There are several reasons why I believe this. First, the message a nation is sending through capital punishment is that because life is sacred, murderers need to be punished. However, capital punishment is a form of killing. A nation and its people should keep higher moral standards by not participating in killing. Second, the main reason that capital punishment is justified is that it decreases the murder rate. However, the murder rate in the countries that have capital punishment is often no lower than it those countries that don't have it. There is little evidence that shows that capital punishment is an effective deterrent. Third, the economic costs of capital punishment are high, due to the lengthy legal processes. It often costs more to carry out capital punishment than to keep a criminal in prison for the rest of their life. And finally, criminals have more time to reflect on their crimes and change their ways of thinking if they serve a life sentence. If convicted, murderers may come to regret their crimes, and help society by making public statements or participating in prison seminars to talk about the evils of murder and other serious crimes.

2. Should space exploration be continued?

I believe that space exploration is useful for humankind and that it should be continued. Human beings have much to gain from understanding more about space—including other planets, solar systems and galaxies, as well as knowing how all these things first came about. We may someday be able to find life on other planets and even contact other advanced life forms. Through this, we humans may make great progress as well as learn more about ourselves and other life forms. In addition, our space research has also helped to develop a variety of useful new products. Some people argue against space exploration, saying that it is too expensive. However, different countries have recently joined together to share costs and expertise in the effort to explore space. These shared projects have the additional benefit of bringing countries closer together and giving people from different nations a deeper understanding of what it is to be a human from planet earth. Perhaps one day, nations can spend more energy on exploring space together rather than fighting each other and tearing our own planet apart.

3. Are nature-conservation efforts worth the financial costs?

Nature conservation efforts are definitely worth the costs. In fact, we cannot afford to put our environment at risk, for we cannot exist without a healthy environment. We all depend on unspoiled topsoil to grow our crops, clean air to breathe, and safe water to drink. We all benefit when we are protected from toxic pollution that could make us sick or kill us. We have taken our natural resources for granted for too long and we are now at risk of losing them. For example, we are losing diversity of species as an increasing number of plants and animal species become extinct. These losses are causing serious imbalances in our eco-systems. Global warming is changing our climates around the world, causing more violent storms and destructive droughts. We do not yet know exactly what the

consequences of these changes will be, but they will surely be harmful for the planet as well as for all humans. In conclusion, we have to refute the idea that nature-conservation efforts are too costly. Instead, we must realize that the more serious cost will result from not taking the necessary steps today to halt the destruction of our natural environments.

4. Will Japan's predicted labor shortages cause a major crisis?

I feel that Japan's predicted labor shortage will cause a major crisis in the future. In fact, there is already a labor shortage in some fields. Many young Japanese now want white collar jobs, and turn away from jobs that are dirty, dangerous or difficult. There is already a shortage of people who are willing to become construction workers, farmers, fishermen, factory workers, and care workers in nursing homes. In my parents' hometown, foreign workers had to be brought in to help grow and pick crops. More foreigners will have to be recruited in the future to do jobs that Japanese will not take. Meanwhile, countries like China and India with much larger workforces are the countries that are now gaining strength and growing into economic powerhouses. Young people in those countries work hard to educate themselves and to obtain the skills needed in a competitive marketplace. In the future Japan's shrinking labor force will be heavily taxed to take care of older Japanese people, while an increasing number of people will have to take care of aging parents and grandparents, reducing the labor force even more. In conclusion, the growing labor shortage will have a bad effect on Japan's economy and competitiveness.

5. Should everyone be entitled to free healthcare?

In the case of Japan, I do not believe that everyone should be entitled to free healthcare. There are three reasons why I believe that most Japanese should pay for their healthcare. First, the Japanese government already has one of the largest national debts in the world. The government simply cannot afford to offer free healthcare to everyone. Second, Japan's current national healthcare system already works quite well. People who make more money pay more for their healthcare than people who make less. And the poorest people are offered free healthcare. This system makes sense. After all, the most important thing is to make sure that everyone can afford healthcare and our current system does this quite well. Finally, when healthcare is free, people tend to see doctors and to go to hospitals more often. Lonely people, for example, enjoy the attention they get from doctors and nurses and go when they have no physical reason to do so. If people have to pay for the visits, they are less likely to make unnecessary visits. For these reasons, I believe that healthcare should not be free.