

## 156 On Considering the Problem of the Elderly

No one can escape the fate of aging as long as he or she lives. It is said that aging has already begun at the age of 18 physically. If this is the case, it can be said that human beings live in order to get old. Aging well is the biggest challenge in anyone's life.

Physical aging can be prolonged considerably if it is used continuously, and mental activities can be improved for a considerable period of time, and even creative activities can be carried out, if they are used continuously and flexibly. To age well, we must continue to actively engage in physical and mental activities.

But even so, we cannot escape aging at all. In particular, according to Professor Yasukawa's estimate, Japan will have an aging rate of 15.4% for those aged 65 and over by 2000, making it the oldest country in the world, surpassing Sweden, West Germany, and other countries. In the U.S., U.K., and other countries, the aging rate is expected to decline after peaking in 1990. Therefore, it is inevitable to take measures for the inactive elderly.

The problems for the aged can be divided into the following five categories. The first problem is income, the second is housing, the third is medical care, the fourth is personal care in case of physical disability, and the fifth is mental stability and satisfaction.

The first can only be considered at the national level. The second and third would be issues to be considered jointly by the national and local governments, including housing and senior citizen facilities. However, the fourth and fifth are the most difficult and challenging issues for qualified measures. Of course, the first two issues are also major problems, and income and housing issues are also major supports and conditions for the fourth and fifth issues. However, it is difficult to address not only money, but also privacy, self-esteem, and concern, as well as labor, love, and heart. The elderly people must rely on their families, neighbors, volunteers, and local communities for support. The elderly should make efforts to age well with self-awareness, and local governments should play an important role in building a community that can respond to the modern needs of urban society.