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Noted Japanese Jurist Speaks Out Against Capital Punishment

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Maurer School of Law
Bloomington

Noted Japanese Jurist Speaks Out Against Capital Punishment

While delivering the 1996 Jerome Hall Lecture on April 4 to a capacity crowd, at Bloomington's School of Law, **Shigemitsu Dando**, one of Japan's foremost jurists, argued for the abolishment of the death penalty, which he said was inconsistent with human dignity.

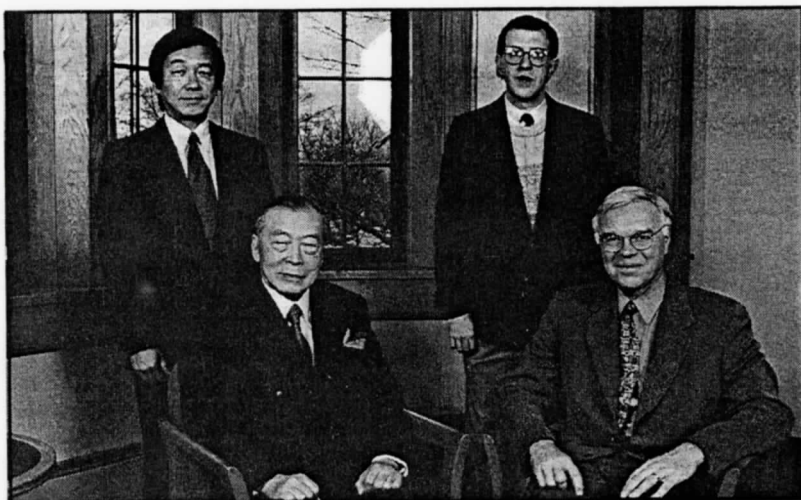
Dando is a retired justice of the Supreme Court of Japan, professor and dean emeritus of Tokyo University's Faculty of Law, and Special Advisor to the Imperial Household. The author of numerous books and articles, including a dozen articles written in English, French, and German, he has spent a large part of his career examining the legal and moral implications of capital punishment and urging the Japanese government to do away with the death penalty.

His presentation, "Toward the Abolition of the Death Penalty," was a wide-ranging argument against capital punishment that touched on historical, religious, legal, and literary sources.

Dando said, "Nowadays, almost all industrialized countries have ratified the United Nations optional protocol calling for the abolition of the death penalty. It looks rather unnatural and unreasonable that our two major developed countries still remain retentionists."

Dando began his hour-long lecture by reviewing some precedents in Japanese history. He noted that during the Heian Period (810 A.D.-1156 A.D.) the death sentence was not enforced in Japan, because Japanese emperors traditionally commuted such sentences. He concluded his lecture by stating that the death penalty was inconsistent with humanistic criminal policy.

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Dr. Shigemitsu Dando, sits with Dean Alfred Aman, flanked by Masahito Inouye, professor of law at the University of Tokyo, and IU professor Joseph Hoffmann.

Randy Johnson

Dando, continued from page 6

When asked what his biggest reason for opposing the death penalty was, Dando simply responded, "Misjudgement."

Dando's lecture was a fitting tribute to the late Jerome Hall, whom Dando met on his first trip to the United States in 1950 and with whom he remained life-long friends.

On this trip, Dando also spent a day in Indianapolis, meeting with Governor **Evan Bayh** and speaking to a group of lawyers and business leaders in the chambers of the Indiana Supreme Court—an event sponsored by the Japan-America Society of Indiana and presided over by Indiana Chief Justice **Randall T. Shepard**. At the statehouse reception held in his honor, Justice Dando received the "Sagamore of the Wabash" award, the State of Indiana's highest civilian honor. The Justice is the highest ranking Japanese government official ever to visit Indiana.

The week-long visit, hosted by Dean **Alfred Aman**, was arranged largely through the efforts of **Joseph Hoffmann** of the IU School of Law, who was a Fulbright scholar in Japan in 1995. Hoffmann said, "Justice Dando commands, in Japan, the highest respect of any person in the legal field. That is why his visit to the law school is so important."

The school is embarking on a new Pacific Rim Partnerships Program which will forge closer ties with East Asian institutions.

— R. N.