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Japan Screen Topics

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LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS

203 feet 5 min. 37 sec.

1. (BALLOON) The balloon goes up to announce the 35th General Election of the Lower House of the Japanese Diet, to be held on October 7th. The official start of the campaign is September 17th.

2. (COMMITTEE OFFICE) In Tokyo, as in the other 130 electoral districts, the Election Administration Committee registers the local candidates.

(FLAG) Each is presented with the official symbols of his candidature, a flag, a plaque for the door of his campaign office, and various stickers and penants. The various representatives then rush off to their offices to begin campaigning as soon as possible. At stake are 511 Lower House seats, and 891 politicians running for election have just 20 days to gain the support they'll need to win one.

3. (GATHERING) The nation's major political figures kick off the campaign, addressing the people on their party's policies....

(MAN W/WHITE CORSAGE) The Liberal Democratic Party President and incumbent Prime Minister, Masayoshi Ohira. The election stems from his dissolution of the Lower House in an attempt to raise a comfortable working majority in the next Diet.

(MAN W/GLASSES) Chairman Kazuo Asukata of the nation's major opposition group, the Socialist Party....

(MAN W/YELLOW MIKE) From the Komei-to Party, Chairman Yoshikatsu Takeiri....

(RUINED BLDG.) And in Hiroshima, Chairman Ryosaku Sasaki speaks for the Social Democrats....

(MAN SPEAKING AT NIGHT) The Chairman of the Japan Communist Party, Kenji Miyamoto....

(STREET-SIDE GATHERING) And campaigning in a residential suburb of Tokyo is....Yohei Kohno, leader of the New Liberal Club, a faction which broke away from the ruling party in the run up to the last election in 1976.

4. (LOUDSPEAKER-VAN) Since the candidates are not allowed to use the broadcast media during the campaign, they must take to the streets to stir up support and to spread their messages. Loudspeaker-vans are just one method....

For all their efforts, this election is the least competitive since the Second World War; the ratio of seats to candidates is 1.7.... The crucial issue is whether or not the LDP can increase their own share of the seats in the House, and Prime Minister Ohira sets a target of 271 seats in order to provide him with a controlling majority in all the standing committees. At issue too is whether the Socialist Party can put an end to the steady decline in its popularity over the last few polls.

5. (SCHOOLYARD) Among the first people to cast their votes in the October 7th General Election are the Prime Minister and his wife, confident of their party's victory.

6. (SCHOOL GYM) The continuing rain that covered most of the country, undoubtedly contributed to the lowest turn-out of voters since the War... 53.19%...And as this trend became clear, the political analysts began to wonder how this would affect the results.

7. (BALLOT BOX) As soon as possible after the polling stations closed, the all-important task of counting the votes began. In rural areas this was on the night of the election, while in Tokyo and other major cities, it began on the morning of the eighth.

8. (TV MONITOR) Despite the poor showing at the booths, the attention of the nation was on the results, which were reported and analysed on national television. For the benefit of those who couldn't be at home and near their own sets, TV monitors were placed at strategic points around the cities.

9. (PINNING FLOWERS) At the LDP headquarters, Prime Minister Ohira watched the returns and assessed their meaning for his Party, and essentially for his own political future...Soon the picture was clear: with only 248 seats won, the Liberal Democrats had not only failed to gain the announced goal of 271 seats, but had not even secured a simple majority of 255 seats in the Lower House. This situation was later rectified, however, when 10 independent winners joined the Party, thus assuring the Liberal Democrats of continuing control of the reins of government.

A GARDEN CLASSROOM

72 feet 2 min.

1. (SCHOOL CHILDREN) City children everywhere are increasingly cut off from the natural environment.

In Tokyo, the Okudo Primary School aims to compensate for that in some measure by the introduction of a school garden. Recently the school rented a nearby one thousand square hectare plot of land so that the pupils could get first hand experience in farming and gardening techniques.

2. (DIGGING UP SWEET POTATOES) While teaching the children the value of labour - and the pleasure that can come from it, it's also good experience for the teachers, many of them city-folk themselves. The children have produced sweet potatoes, tomatoes, egg-plants, cabbages, onions and potatoes, and even peanuts. And when they've harvested the fruits of their labours, the children can look forward to cooking and eating what they've grown. From next year the school garden will actually become part of the curriculum proper.

3. (LARGE CUCUMBER) At the Harvest Festival all the children in the school join in the fun. The festival is a traditional part of Japanese life; the children carry a mikoshi, or portable shrine, decorated with some of their produce, and thank the Deity for a bountiful crop.

BOATIQUE AMERICA

91 feet 2 min. 31 sec.

1. (HARBOUR) Once a floating Japanese fair, the re-fitted Shin-Sakura Maru returns to Japan laden with goods from the United States. Part of the attempt to adjust the balance in trade with Japan, the 13,000 ton vessel puts into Tokyo's Harumi Pier at the start of "Boatique America".

2. (INSIDE SHIP) The two decks of the ship have been fitted-out exactly like the floors of a major department store. 145 different manufacturer are represented, and the 8,000 varieties of goods on board are worth a staggering ten million dollars!

3. (CLOTHING) Clothing and accessories, jewelry and cosmetics, and at the other end of the scale, outdoor goods and sporting wear. The household items open up new possibilities and ideas for Japanese families and individuals alike, with kitchen wear and luxury goods that are not normally available in this country....

(BICYCLES) And for the more younger Boatique customers, a selection of the latest American toys.

4. ("BEEF SHOP") But undoubtedly the most popular department was the "Beef Shop". Beef is extremely expensive in Japan, which helps explain the eagerness to buy it here at prices 40% lower than ashore.

5. (CASTING OFF) The Shin-Sakura Maru casts off and heads for Sendai in the north, the second of its 13 ports of call that will keep Boatique America in Japanese waters until mid-December.

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