## It's Cold Isn't It

While waiting for an opening ceremony in the gym to start, I saw a Jet Heater in use for the first time



My initial reaction was to wonder about its efficacy as a heating method. Yet despite that, I stood near it throughout the day. I felt somewhat guilty since the students were all sitting in assigned seats far from the heater. But I was cold.

My hometown is colder than Kochi, and it snows enough to pile up, but I didn't feel as cold in my everyday life there as I have living in Japan. I think this is because even if you try to escape from the cold by going indoors, the buildings here have little insulation, so you'll still feel cold.

After researching a bit, it seems that throughout most of Japan, there is no requirement to include proper insulation when constructing a building, so it is cheaper for companies not to. A baffling consequence of this is that houses in Hokkaido are warmer than those in many other prefectures.

I'm not just complaining because I'm cold. In Japan, more people die from heat shock (sudden changes in blood pressure after getting in a hot bath) than from traffic accidents, and cold houses with little insulation are one cause. Houses with good insulation also don't require as much energy to heat, so they can help slow down global warming.

But I have to admit that it's not all bad. If you're ever unsure what to talk about, you can always rely on the trusty "samui desu ne" or "It's cold, isn't it." And I think the seasonal greetings used in Japanese and common at the beginning of speeches, emails, or letters, such as "Despite spring having begun according to the calendar, the unchanging harsh cold con-

tinues" carry more meaning the colder you feel.

Lastly, another heating method I saw here for the first time is a kerosene heater with a water-filled teapot placed on top, and I now have some great memories of huddling around it and chatting with the other teachers.

