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Fam tenancy. Japan
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TENANCY PROBLEMS IN JAPAN

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TENANCY problems are looked on as the center of rural problems in present Japan. Of course, we have had tenancy problems in the past. Tenants have appealed to landlords to have the contract rent reduced owing to bad crop conditions, sometimes even to the extent of cancelling all of the rent. However, through mutual sympathy and local customs, landlords and tenants were usually able to solve such problems quickly and satisfactorily. Difficulties were generally temporary.

But recently, especially since the war, the relation between landlords and tenants has changed, having been affected by the pressure of rural economic difficulties on the one hand, and influenced by the new social ideas and social movements on the other. If trouble happened to arise between the landlord and tenant, they did not solve the difficulty themselves as heretofore. They disputed insistently about their lawful rights, or organized themselves into unions which were unsympathetic toward one another and only attempted to emphasize the merits of their own particular case.

Many tenants are constantly at odds with their landlords. Such cases have not only increased rapidly but have become worse and worse. Some refuse to make new temporary agreements with the landlord for reduced rent, hoping for a permanent revision of the lease. To bring pressure to bear, not only have the tenants resorted to mass movements, but they have also appealed to the courts. There are many instances where the conflict of interests between tenants and landlords has served to disturb the normal peace of whole rural communities.

In 1926, there were about 2,700 of these mass movements in Japan, with about 250,000 tenants and 40,000 landlords involved. There were relatively few cases in certain districts of the main island until about fifteen years ago. Now, such cases prevail in every district of Japan, and although the number of cases varies according to crop conditions in different years and according to local conditions, there is a tendency for the number to increase from year to year.

The appeals by the tenant to the landlord are very complex. They have many appeals such as for the continuation of the con-

tract after the landlord has served notice to quit; the recognition of tenancy or perpetual tenancy; compensation for the tenant when the contract expires; the improvement of the tenant's contract; and demands for a better social position. It is clear that almost all of their appeals represent attempts to get a more favorable division of the product.

In former times, appeals for a reduction of the contract rent occurred only in bad crop years, and even then the amounts involved were small. Recently the amounts have increased, and many such appeals have occurred every year. Many appeals are not related to crop conditions, but represent a demand on the part of the tenant for a perpetual agreement with the landlord at a lower rent.

In the past, whenever the tenant differed with his landlord, it was the custom for the tenant to visit the landlord and appeal to him for help on the basis of sympathy. But recently, the tenant has taken a militant attitude. In many instances where the tenants have used mob action, the landlords have been obliged to meet their demands, at least temporarily. Frequently the tenants united, swearing not to pay the rent to the landlord but to keep cooperatively their rental rice, and not return their leased lands to the landlord. If the landlord brought a suit against them, the tenants made excuses in order to delay the decision, or the tenant union employed lawyers who were prepared to defend such cases. Sometimes the tenant appealed to the public through demonstrations, sympathetic strikes in primary schools, resignations of firemen, withdrawals from the cooperative association, or agreements to delay the payment of local rates and other public assessments.

The landlords in turn brought pressure to bear on the tenants. If the landlord was forced to demand rent from a tenant who refused to pay, the landlord brought suit for the payment and executed the provisional attachment against the harvested or standing crops. The landlord might also bring suit for the return of the leased land by the tenant and execute the provisional right to prohibit any tenant's living on that land. Some landlords who took the land from their tenants or who had land which was turned back by the tenants, organized cooperative associations and corporations to raise crops on a comparatively large-scale basis, or to manage the rented land, thus avoiding the difficulty of dealing directly with tenants.

Expecting strong opposition, the tenants organized tenant unions to combat the landlords. The landlords in turn organized landlord unions. Of course, we had a few such unions prior to the present time, but recently they have increased very rapidly. For instance, from 1918 to 1926, the number of tenant unions increased from 241 to 3,926, and the number of landlord unions, from 224 to 605. At first the tenant union movement was mainly for economic reasons. Since universal suffrage was proclaimed, the movement has gradually changed to a political one, and many political parties have been established, supported by the tenant and other labor unions.

The landlord unions have been largely influenced by economic factors. Their principal object has been to secure a measure of protection against the tenant unions. To increase their power, they are establishing real estate companies, and some of them include several prefectures. Recently there have been developed the landlord and tenant arbitration unions which hope to establish goodwill and to prevent further disputes. In 1926, there were about 1,500 such unions compared with 75 in 1918.

Many measures for solving the tenancy problem have been adopted by the Japanese Government. Of these, the Tenancy Dispute Arbitration Act and the Small Holdings Act are the two most important. It was the intention of the former act that the arbitration of cases should be adapted to local conditions, customs, and the like. The Small Holdings Act was planned to help the tenant and other small farmers buy farm land in order that they might become landed farmers.

Of the causes of the tenancy problems the following are generally considered important:

A. Fundamental causes:

1. Economic struggle between landlords and tenants.
2. Unsatisfactory points in the tenancy system.
3. Low profits in farming.
4. The economic difficulties caused by the upward trend of the prices of commodities and of standards of living.
5. Changes in the tenant's social ideas and increases in the many kinds of social movements.

B. Secondary causes:

1. Bad crop conditions caused by insects, diseases, dry weather, and other factors.

2. The delayed payment of rent by the tenant.
3. The taking up of the leased land from the tenant by the landlord.
4. The tendency for any one tenant to follow other tenants who were at odds with their landlords.

It is my opinion that the fundamental causes of these problems are the small size of the farms, the close contact of the cities with the country, and the limited extent to which farms have been re-organized in Japan.

Statistics show that the number of farmers who operate farms of 2.5 acres or less, constitutes 69 per cent of all farmers, and that the average size of farms in Japan is about three acres. On the other hand, only 31 per cent of all farmers are landed farmers while 27 per cent are landed and leased farmers, and 42 per cent are pure tenant farmers. Moreover, the leased land makes up 49 per cent of the total arable land in the country. It is not necessary to mention the present day economic difficulties arising from these small farms, which were satisfactory during an age when a self-sufficient system of farming was carried on.

Japanese farmers have been obliged to follow the rapid commercialization of other industries. Of course, other industries have developed large-scale production very rapidly in recent years. The farmers themselves have recognized that their economic condition was not improving as rapidly as that of persons in other industries. At the same time, they have learned by contact with urban districts that the industrial laborers have fought their employers to improve their economic and social position. It is natural, therefore, that they should resort to the same methods. Tenants have been too busy fighting their landlords to improve their farming, which, under present economic conditions, is the fundamental way to improve their position and solve their economic difficulties.

We, in Japan, have heard the world wide discussion about the reorganization and commercialization of the farm, and to some extent it has been brought about in Japan. But it does not touch the fundamental problems of farm organization. The mechanization of the farm is another subject of great interest in Japan, and we are attempting to use many of the machines which have been introduced from foreign countries as well as those invented in Japan. In these days we can hear the explosions of the internal combustion engine in the rural districts, especially during the

threshing seasons. But since agriculture in Japan has developed as a manual occupation, the extent to which machinery can be used is generally limited to such farming operations as threshing grain, making straw-rope, pumping water, and so on. Of course, we have had some experience in using new machinery efficiently in the field. One of these was an experiment at the Kagoshima Prefecture Farm Land Utilization Experiment Station, where a comparison of the labor used on 2.5 acres of land was made. It showed that the conventional practice for weeding and cultivating cost \$47.80 for 86.5 women and 39.1 men, while the use of the newly invented Japanese style cultivator resulted in a cost of only \$21.50 for 46.7 women and 4.7 men, with 2.9 oxen and 1.8 horses. But we cannot expect similar results in every district, because certain cropping systems, especially the rice industry, do not permit using machinery efficiently on the land; also to use machinery efficiently on the land the acreage per working man must be increased. We can only expect such increases where many farmers have left their farms, or where we have enough uncultivated and arable land to increase the acreage of the fields. Such conditions exist only to a limited extent.

The farm mechanization movement in Japan has stimulated and contributed to agricultural development, but the reason that it has not greatly affected farm organization is that it has been tried mainly on the side of staple production.

I believe that the farms ought to be organized in three unit systems, namely, cropping, animal husbandry, and agricultural industry. The first two systems apply directly to the land, which means they are much influenced by natural conditions. Consequently they cannot be run like other industries. The agricultural industry system, however, has the same characteristics as other industries. It differs from them only in being a part of the farm business. Therefore, if the mechanization of agriculture had been tried on this side of production, it would have contributed much more to the development of agriculture than now, and all of the farmers would have been much more prosperous. Indeed, it would be easy to mechanize agriculture on this side of production in Japan. But cropping is generally the most important system of farm organization. It is for this reason that farm mechanization has been tried mainly on the side of staple production. If the mechanization movement were tried on the side of agricultural

industry, it is clear that the combination of the three unit system would be changed. Not only would the animal husbandry system be raised to the same level of importance as the cropping system in the farm organization, but agricultural industry would become most prominent.

The farmers in Japan are on farms of too small a size to operate profitably under the present rural economic system. Under such conditions we cannot expect to develop a new farm organization as indicated above. We shall have to change these conditions and to do so we should try to organize farms under the cooperative system to some extent. Moreover, it is necessary to change the rural economic system and farm organization, not only to control and adjust the departments of farm production to local conditions and to market conditions, but also to decentralize industry.

In short, by the mechanization of the farm, especially on the side of the agricultural industry system, the farm organization will be fundamentally reformed and industrialized. At the same time all the farmers will improve their businesses, and to some extent it will help to solve their economic difficulties as well as their tenancy problems.