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THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN

— On the Public Works Program for Relief to Farmers in 1930s —

By Tomohiro OKADA*

I Introduction

The "Showa Panic" which was a link of the World Great Depression in 1930s, had been a major turning point of the prewar Japanese capitalism.¹⁾ The agricultural crisis which took place at about the same time was an acute blow to rural population who had already been suffering from continued recession.²⁾ In addition to this, pressure from colonial agriculture on the one hand and drastic restructuring of domestic industry which was a result of rapid industrial rationalization by the monopoly capitalism on the other hand, caused an extensive privation of domestic farmers as well as "antagonism between town and country". Under these circumstances, and shortly following the notorious "May 15" coup d'état attempt, the coalition cabinet decided to undertake a series of measures to save impoverished farmers.

The Emergency Relief Measures, "Jikyoku Kyokyu Jigyo", are the object of this research,³⁾ and the new policy marked a sort of "turning point of Japanese agriculture policy", of which an important aspect was the government policy for rural development. This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, the policy has been carried over

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- 1) This type of perception can be seen in Harumaru Inoue and Seiji Usami, *Kikiniokeru Nihon Shihonshugino Kozo (The Structure of Japanese Capitalism under Crisis)*, Iwanami Shoten, 1951 (in Japanese). The work of Kaichiro Ohishi, "Sekai Daikyoko to Nihon Shihonshugi" (The Great Depression and Japanese Capitalism), in Kaichiro Ohishi ed., *Nippon Teikoku-shugishi, 2-Sekai Dai Kyoko (History of Imperialism in Japan — 2, The World Panic)*, Tokyo University Press, 1987 (in Japanese), offers a comprehensive overview of researches made in the past on this subject.
- 2) As for actual depressed state of farmers at that time, refer to the *Nihon Nogyo Nenpo (Japan Agricultural Yearbook)*, Vol. 1, by "Nippon Nogyo Kenkyukai" (Japan Agricultural Research Institute), Kaizosha, 1932 (in Japanese), and Shuzo Teruoka, *Nihon Nogyo Mondaino Tenkai (Development of Agricultural Issues of Japan)*, Vol. 2, Tokyo University Press, 1984 (in Japanese), Chapter 5.
- 3) Apart from the Emergency Relief Measures mentioned, there were other actions, taken, such as introduction of the Rice Control Law and measures to support silk prices. In this paper, I confine my study to the Emergency Relief Measures, and above all to the Public Works Program for Relief, because they constituted the main part of the overall policies and thus had a direct impact on rural economies themselves, as an attempt for their restructuring.

into the postwar period, and secondly, because it had much in common with regional development policies of other developed countries who were simultaneously struck by the Great Depression.

The Emergency Relief Measures were remarkable for their scale. In terms of budgetary appropriations, they reached 860 million yen in three fiscal years from September, 1932 to 1934, of which 560 million was disbursed by the state and 300 million by local authorities. In considering the fact that the total budget was no more than 2 billion yen at the time, the Emergency Relief Measures represented "something quite comparable to New Deals"⁴⁾, and almost all of them were financed by deficit-financing bonds. In other words, they weren't gotten into shape without a shift to the new system of managed currency.

The Emergency Relief Measures consisted of the "Public Works Program for Relief to Farmers" and the "Movement for Reconstruction of Rural Economy", of which the former was predominant in terms of spending (above 80% in fiscal year 1933)⁵⁾ According to Fumio Goto, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry at that time, the Public Works Program for Relief represented "emergency measures", while the Movement for Reconstruction of Rural Economy was considered as a "permanent policy".⁶⁾

Ken-ichi Miyamoto once called that the Emergency Relief Measures marked the starting point of regional development policy in Japan⁷⁾, but no positive study has yet been made in this context. I propose to review the Public Works Program for Relief to Farmers, which occupied the crucial part of the Emergency Relief Measures, to see how they grew into a comprehensive regional development policy in this country. By doing so, I try to show the process in which the capital gradually subsumed rural economy, while expanding market and transformed rural economy as the outcome of this policy.

Broadly speaking, the Public Works Program for Relief to Farmers consisted of the "Rural Public Works" undertaken by the Ministry of Interior and the "Agricultural Public Works" pursued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The former consisted of public works relating to road, flood control and ports and undertaken by each of the state, prefecture, and local municipalities, the last two of which

4) Ken-ichi Miyamoto, "Showa Kyoko to Zaisei Seisaku" (The Showa Panic and Fiscal Policy) in Hazama Genzo ed., *Koza Nihon Shihonshugi Hattatsushiron (History of Development of Japanese Capitalism)*, Vol. III, Nippon Hyoronsha, 1968 (in Japanese), p. 199.

5) Ken-ichi Miyamoto, *ibid.*, p. 198.

6) Economic Reconstruction Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, *Daiikkai Noson Keizai Kosei Chuo Inkai Yoroku (Summary of Proceedings of the First Meeting of Central Committee for Reconstruction of Rural Economy)*, 1933 (in Japanese), p. 21.

7) Ken-ichi Miyamoto, *Shakai Shihonron (Social Capital, revised edition)*, Yuhikaku, 1976 (in Japanese), p. 61. Also, ref. Shigehiro Tanaka, "Takahashi Zaiseino Sangyo Narabini Chiiki Seisaku" (The Industrial and Regional Policy under the K. Takahashi's Finance) in *Keizai Ronso (The Economic Review of Kyoto University)*, Vol. 113, No. 4 and 5, 1974 (in Japanese).

received high subsidies as well as funds derived from issuance of local bonds or low-interest loans made by the government. On the other hand, the Agricultural Public Works comprised those works on arable land, forestry as well as fishery. Compared on the basis of the budget for fiscal year 1933, we see that the Rural Public Works, costing 120 million yen, were far more important than the Agricultural Public Works which took no more than 50 million yen.⁸⁾

Although there were a number of studies made on the Public Works Program for Relief, a majority of them merely focused their attention to those partial aspects such as lack of consistent planning, dishonest behavior of landowners, contractors or civil servants, beneficial impact on industry by massive procurement of construction materials, and added burden on the part of farmers owing to taxation, contribution in terms of money and labor, etc., usually concluding that "these undertakings did little to benefit panic-stricken farmers".⁹⁾ Practically, none of these studies ever tried to make any comprehensive, objective and serious analysis of the public works themselves.

A noteworthy exception is the research published by Takafusa Nakamura,¹⁰⁾ as he properly point to the effects of public spending. But he tends to emphasize it too much to ignore an important function of these "public" investment as a means of accumulation of capital. Also, his study does not include those works undertaken by the Ministry of Interior. In view of these shortcomings in the past research, I believe that following approaches are necessary to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter:

First, to clarify historical significance of the Public Works Program for Relief with regard to the development phase of capitalism.

Second, in studying those social means of labor such as roads and port facilities, a distinction must be made between process of construction and process of functioning of these facilities as the social means of labor,¹¹⁾ because the main shortcoming of earlier researches consisted of the lack of such distinction and their excessive attention to the construction processes themselves, with all their scandalous aspects.

Third, we must draw a clear line between the works undertaken by the Ministry of Interior and those pursued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, because

8) Ken-ichi Miyamoto, *ibid.*, p. 198.

9) Takemaro Mori, "Nihon Fasizumu no Keiseito Noson Keizai Kosei Undo" (Origin of the Facism in Japan and the Movement for Reconstruction of Rural Economy) in *Rekishigaku Kenkyu* (*Journal of Historical Studies*), special issue, October, 1971 (in Japanese), p. 139. This is typical of most studies done on the subject so far.

10) Takafusa Nakamura "Takahashi Zaisei to Kokyo Toshi Seisaku" (Budgetary Policy of Finance Minister Takahashi and Public Spending) in Takafusa Nakamura ed., *Senkankino Nippon Keizai Bunseki* (*Analysis of Japanese Economy Between Two World Wars*), Yamakawa Press, 1981 (in Japanese).

11) Jun Ikegami, *Gendai Shihonshugi Zaiseiron* (*Modern Capitalism and Public Finance*), Yuhikaku, 1974 (in Japanese), p. 158 and p. 166.

their inherent characteristics are rather different. The former can be said to show more explicitly the relationships between urban and rural areas, while the latter tends to highlight various inter-relationships within the rural communities themselves. One of the deficiencies of the earlier studies was their failure to distinguish this point.

II Historical Position of the Public Works Program for Relief to Farmers

It should be remembered, to begin with, the Public Works Program for Relief were not the result of demand from rural farmers. Those who started the movement for relief to farmers advocated for moratorium, and in response to this, and as an alternative, the two leading political parties and the government came up with the Public Works Program for Relief.¹²⁾ What was the reason for this? In the paper titled "Formation of Public Works for Relief to Farmers", Akira Tamaki positioned it in the context of social transition following the First World War and thought that bureaucrats played a key role to introduce public works in the wake of Showa Panic.¹³⁾ He, however, did not explain why then the bureaucrats had to promote public works. From now on, we shall try to understand the process of introduction of the Public Works Program for Relief.

a) *Historical Premise of Public Undertakings by the Ministry of Interior*

Historical facts of public works by the Ministry of Interior clearly shows that the Ministry's undertakings to construct roads, embankments and port facilities were corresponding to the development of traffic and energy resources as means of production under the monopoly capitalism. For instance, number of automobiles increased from 3,869 in 1919 to 80,000 in 1929, causing an acute need for improvement and extension of public roads.¹⁴⁾ In the area of flood control, the second half of 1920s was the period when the focus of public spending shifted from conventional flood control to development of water resources as hydro-electric power generation (output of which grew from 820,000 kw in 1912 to 2,950,000 kw in 1929), and as a result, work method switched from "low water river work" type to "high water work" type

12) Japan Agricultural Research Institute, *Japan Agricultural Yearbook*, Vol. 1, 1932 (in Japanese), contains detailed account of the situation.

13) Akira Tamaki, "Kyuno Doboku Jigyo eno Michi" (Formation of Public Works for Relief to Farmers) in *Noson Kenkyu (Journal of Rural Community Studies)*, No. 40, March, 1975 (in Japanese).

14) Growth of automobile Transportation was spectacular at that time, "Towards 1927-28, trucking industry became a serious menace to railways. It became clear, by 1929, that such lines like Kita-Kyushu Branch, Maizuru and Yokohama were unlikely to be able to complete, and under these circumstances, administration of land vehicle transport was transferred from the Ministry of Postal Affairs to the Ministry of Railways in 1928. In the following year, the Ministry set up the Vehicle Transport Bureau in order to supervise and control vehicle transport business with regular service". Ref. Jishaken, ed., *Jidosha Binran (Automobile Directory)*, 1943 (in Japanese), ho-p.3.

with construction of dam gates and embankments.¹⁵⁾ Due to more intense utilization of river waters, and the need to prevent disasters which might result from it, the importance of water-course related construction work grew day by day. On the other hand, volume of cargo-handling at Japanese ports increased from 84 million tons to 130 million tons during the same period (from 1919 to 1929). This of course was due to the development of industry at large, but we must bear in mind that vessels themselves became much larger in the meantime, making improvement of port facilities an essential task for the public bodies.¹⁶⁾

Thus, the two decades of 20s and 30s was a period in which the country faced a grave shortage of industrial infrastructures to meet the rapid development of capitalism. The nation's roads, rivers and ports needed constant improvement and expansion. The growth of heavy industry in the 30s further intensified the needs.

In the meantime, so-called the "rice riot" of 1918 caused the government to introduce countermeasures against unemployment for the first time in history, but prior to 1925, the government employment agency and return-home-to-farm policy represented the only answers in this regard.¹⁷⁾ However, unemployment became a serious social issue in 1925, and during the year, six major cities and Osaka Prefecture started to undertake public works during winter season as a means of securing jobs for unemployed urban citizens. This marked the start of the unemployment relief work in Japan.¹⁸⁾

As the Showa Panic became even more serious, relief measures had to be extended. The relief work was now pursued throughout the year, open to all people where unemployment rate remained high. The recommendations made in 1929 by the Council for Social Policy resulted in further expansion of unemployment relief work. Firstly, even those districts where rate of unemployment was not significant were now able to undertake relief work if it contributed to reduce unemployment in surrounding districts suffering from higher jobless ratio. Secondly, in addition to prefectures and local municipalities, irrigation associations, arable land readjustment associations, forestry associations and two other cooperation unions were now entitled to receive low interest loans, namely agrarian and forest public works was added to the list. Finally, the government now undertook to subsidize those works in which more than 50% expenditures was to be spent on materials of domestic origin, by paying at least 10% of labor cost of such undertakings, for the reason that they could reduce

15) "Nihon Dobokushi Hensyuiinkai" (Editorial Committee for History of Civil Engineering in Japan), *Nihon Dobokushi 1909-1941 (History of Civil Engineering in Japan — 1909 to 1941)*, Society of Civil Engineering, 1965 (in Japanese), p. 36.

16) For development of marine transport, see Yoshio Ando and Sadao Matsuyoshi, ed., *Nippon Yusoshi (History of Transport in Japan)*, Nippon Hyoronsha, 1971 (in Japanese).

17) The comments that follows are mainly those from the Ministry of Interior, *Showa 7/8 nendo Shitsugyo Okyu Jigyo Gaiyo (Summary of Emergency Countermeasures Taken against Unemployment during Fiscal Years 1932/33)*, 1935 (in Japanese).

18) Yasoji Kazahaya, *Nippon Shakai Seisakushi (History of Social Policies in Japan)*, Vol. 2, Aoki Bunko, 1951 (in Japanese), p. 360.

indirectly the ratio of unemployment. This is a significant policy because it aimed to turn mere wasted expenses for capital to relief unemployed workers into a positive means of accumulation of capital.

In spite of all this, however, unemployment situation became so acute in 1931 to be left to the discretion of local authorities. The government thus started directly to undertake public works, of which construction of national roads by the Ministry of Interior was a typical example. Similarly, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry started works relating to improvement of arable land, forestry road construction and other public works to cope with unemployment of rural population. The Ministry of Postal Affairs and the Ministry of Railways also started unemployment relief work of their own.

The Saito Coalition Cabinet which was organized in May, 1932, introduced the "5-Year Plan for Public Works to Promote Industry" with a view to take even more positive steps to make public works a key means of fight against unemployment and, at the same time, development of industrial infrastructures. According to the plan, the state was to disburse 375 million yen in five years on works related to road construction (national and prefectural), embankments and port facilities. It became the prototype of the Public Works Program for Relief to be undertaken by the Ministry of Interior.

This shows that during the decade of 1930s, unemployment relief work of Japan drastically changed its character in the wake of needs for more social means of labor and worsening unemployment situation, both resulting from development of the monopoly capitalism. In contrast to the primary stress on relief to the unemployed, the new policies set their main aim to industrial development, in which relief to the unemployed now became a secondary purpose. Moreover, whereas the earlier programs were limited to large cities, the later policy was extended to medium and smaller cities and finally to rural areas. Put in other words, it may be said that relief to the unemployed now assumed the character of measures for expansion of domestic market, which capital adopted positively as a means of accumulation.

b) Historical Premise of Public Works Undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

As stated earlier, it was toward 1930 that agriculture-related public works became a means of relief to the jobless, but the history of government subsidy to such works goes back to 1908 when works for readjustment of arable land became to eligible such support.¹⁹⁾ The rice riot of 1918 clearly showed inadequacy of food supply and the need for more agricultural output. Accordingly, governmental subsidies on development of arable land (1921) and on improvement of irrigation and drainage lines (1923) were started, and in the same process, the subsidies were made available not

19) The description to follow were taken from the *History of Civil Engineering in Japan*, *ibid.*, and from Agricultural Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, *Dai Juichiji Kochi Kakucho Kairyo Jigyo Yoran (Summary of the 11th Program for Expansion and Improvement of Arable Land)*, 1936 (in Japanese). For more details, *Viz. Tetsu Tamaki, ibid.*

only to landowners but to farmers as well. Thus, the share of subsidies paid to small scale undertakings increased gradually.

As a number of experts pointed out already, the upper class farmers, including resident landowners, became the main promoters of improvement of arable land during the Taisho Era (1910 to 1925) and Showa Era which followed.²⁰⁾ Therefore, public subsidization of agricultural undertakings meant not only growth of foodstuff production and stabilization of landowner-tenant relationships, but also a boon to the upper class farmers including resident landlords. This assured on the one hand low price of rice = low wages to the monopoly capitalism, where on the other hand caused disintegration of farmers.

Then, as the recommendations made in 1929 by the Council for Social Policy stated that "the agricultural and forestry public works must promote local industry, secondary sources of income of farming (and fishing) villages, welfare of rural villages and standard of living of farmers, along with utilization of workforce during winter and other off-peak seasons with a view to prevent excessive concentration of population to large cities and to realize adequate distribution of population among regions by smooth movement of people within and outside of the country"²¹⁾, these public works were undertaken in order to create additional job opportunities in rural economy and to ensure work for poorer farmers.

It is now clear that the Public Works Program for Relief to Farmers were more than an attempt of bureaucrats but a necessary consequence of historical importance. As the Japanese economy towards 1930 was going to develop heavy industry under the monopoly capitalism, and while the industry faced both shortage of social means of labor as well as growing unemployment at the same time, public works undertaken by the Ministry of Interior represented a comprehensive and capitalistic approach to overcome the dilemma, while those adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry were means of assistance to upper class farmers and promotion of secondary job in order to satisfy the needs for cheap rice and wages on the part of the capital. Finally, these public works had an additional historical significance in that they were being integrated into a comprehensive regional policy for rural development, unlike the earlier measures against unemployment while lacked consistency and coordination.

III Practice of Public Works Undertaken by the Ministry of Interior

The public works undertaken by the Ministry of Interior concerned roads, embankments and port facilities. While they were based on the "5-Year Plan for

20) An example can be seen in Naraomi Imamura et al., *Tochi Kairyo Hyakunenshi (100 years of Undertakings for Improvement of Arable Land)*, Heibonsha, 1977 (in Japanese), Part II, Chapters 3 and 4.

21) The Social Affairs Bureau of Ministry of Interior, *ibid.*, p. 47.

Public Works to Promote of Industry" already referred to, the Ministry tried to accelerate work schedule as well as to give them greater scale. Tatsuo Yamamoto, who was the Minister of Interior at that time, stated that the purpose of these undertakings was "to promote public works all over the country and to give job opportunities to poor rural population, so that people can find work and derive additional income to become self-sufficient in the long run, so that they can contribute to the growth of local industry".²²⁾ We are to see how these undertakings were implemented and what effect they had on rural economy. Thus, works on port facilities are excluded from the scope of this study.

a) *Improvement of Road*

We have already seen that much work was done in this regard not only by the state, but also by prefectural and municipality governments under generous subsidy (75% for communal roads, and 33% for prefectural roads). It is worth mentioning that the Public Works Program for Relief opened the way for state subsidy to improvement of roads under the management of local communities as cities, towns and villages.

First, with regard to those municipal roads, all construction works were, in principle, to be directly undertaken by the municipalities concerned, according to a direction sent by Karasawa, then Director of Public Works of the Ministry. It said that "if it is necessary to appoint a contractor due to unavoidable reasons, the contract must require employment of the local population", and "all works must give in principle preferential opportunity to the local inhabitants", and "also in principle, wages must be paid on daily basis".²³⁾ Clearly, the primary purpose was to give work opportunities to poor farmers.

I have not yet had access to any data showing the scale of works undertaken on the national level, but some data are available regarding those in Nara Prefecture. The Prefecture's "Directions concerning Subsidy for Development of Farming Villages"²⁴⁾, tells us that almost all of the work took no more than 500 to 1,000 yen per item, though construction of national roads costed 50,000 to 1,300,000 yen per item. Yet, a total amount of 81,650,000 yen was spent during fiscal years 1932 to 1934 for construction of municipal roads across the nation. Assuming that each work costed

22) Roseiso, "Noson Shinko Seisaku o Gisuru Naimubucho • Dobokubu Kacho Kaigi o Nozoite" (A Glimpse over the Meeting of the Director of Interior Affairs and Manager of Public Works Bureau over the Policy for Development of Farming Villages) in *Dorono Kairyo (Road Improvement)*, Vol. 14, No. 9, September, 1932, (in Japanese) and especially p. 109 on "Yamamoto Naimu Daijin Kunji Yoshi" (Summary of the Instruction made by Interior Minister Yamamoto).

23) *Ibid.*, p. 111 on "Noson Shinko Dobokujigyono Shikkonikansuru Dobokukyokucho Shiji" (Direction of the Director of Public Works Regarding Implementation of Public Works for Development of Farming Village).

24) These data were taken from 82 records contained in *Noson Shinko Hajjoreitatsu (Directions concerning Subsidy for Development Farming Villages, 1932~34)* of Public Works Section, Nara Prefecture (in Japanese), at Nara Prefectural Library.

1,000 yen on the average, this means that more than 80,000 works were undertaken in Japan at that time, and this shows a large number of farmers were able to earn some money as the result.

With regard to national roads, we know that during fiscal years 1932 to 1934, the government had several budgets in addition to "Emergency Relief Spending", such as for example "Promotion of Industry", "Unemployment Measures", "Assistance to Farming Village", "Emergency Aid to Rural Community", and so on. However, it should be remembered that road construction works under the slogan of industrial development were in fact aiming to provide work for the unemployed. Moreover, it was not unusual that works were undertaken on the same road and during the same fiscal year using different budget items, or that works continued on a same road from year to year under different budgets. These facts tell us that budgetary titles were not really meaningful, and that works were undertaken in accordance with comprehensive plans not tightly governed by specific budgets. For these reasons, it would be in order for us to take all works related to construction of national roads en bloc, at least for the time period in question.

Table 1 shows results of construction of national roads in three fiscal years. Total works completed reached 173, covering the distance of 170 km (7% of total national roads). Of these roads, ①, ②, ④ and ⑩ took more than 50% in terms of number of works, distance and expenditures. On the other hand, Figure 1 shows geographic distribution of these works completed in three fiscal years. We can see, first of all, that construction works were concentrated to these major industrialized areas such as Keiyo (around Tokyo and Chiba), Keihin (around Tokyo and Yokohama), Chukyo (around Nagoya), Hanshin (around Osaka and Kobe) and Kita-Kyushu (around Yawata and Kokura) districts. The map also shows large number of works done in Hoku-Shin-Etsu and Tohoku trunk roads and those around big local cities. Lastly, we notice that practically, there were almost no construction works done in San-in and Shikoku regions. This shows that contrary to the "relief to rural village" slogan, priority was given to four major industrialized zones and to large cities, consistent with the development of capitalism.

As to breakdown of construction costs, the survey made in 1932, on national roads under the direct management of the state shows that labor and material costs represent 65.7% of total expenditure, followed by land acquisition costs (13.7%) and compensations paid for removal of residential buildings (8.8%)²⁵⁾.

Labor represented the largest component of total costs at 31.6%. An official directive required that for construction of national roads, "first priority should be given to those who were in need of work to be introduced by the public labor exchange, and then to those who are specified by members of local welfare committee,

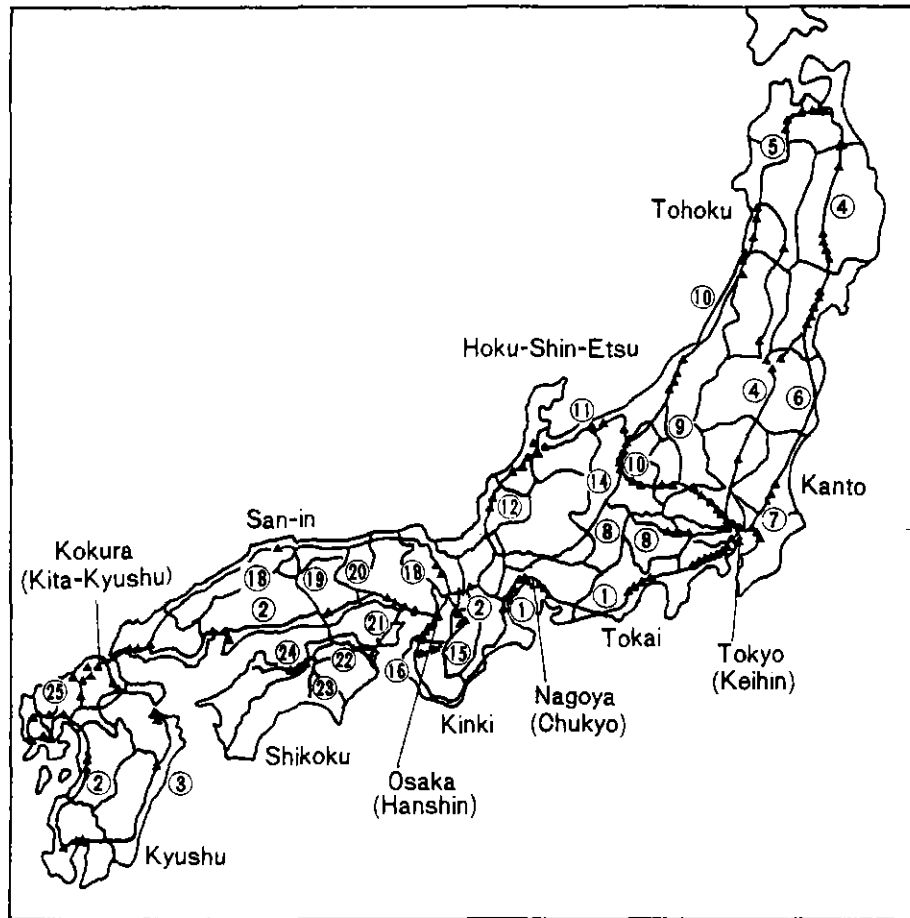
25) Teichi Endo, "Showa 7 nendo Kuni Chokkatsu Kokudo Kairyo Kojini Tsuite" (Road Improvement Works Directly Undertaken by the State in Fiscal Year 1932) in *Doronô Kairyo (Road Improvement)*, Vol. 17, No. 7, July, 1935 (in Japanese), p. 155.

Table 1 Results of Construction of National Roads (total of three fiscal years)

Route No.	Main course	Total distance of road (Kilometers)	Number of works	Percent	Distance of works (Kilometres)	Percent	Expenditures of works (Thousand Yen)	Percent
1	Tokyo-Shizuoka-Yokkaichi-Ujiyamada	496.8	25	14.4	65.9	11.5	5,943	15.1
2	Yokkaichi-Kusatsu-Moji-Kagoshima	1,110.3	25	14.4	102.7	17.9	6,573	16.7
3	Kokura-Oita-Kagoshima	474.3	8	4.6	22.0	3.8	1,887	4.8
4	Tokyo-Utsunomiya-Sendai-Aomori	1,055.2	18	10.4	80.3	14.0	3,474	8.8
5	Fukushima-Yonezawa-Akita-Aomori	527.7	6	3.5	10.4	1.8	732	1.9
6	Tokyo-Mito-Iwanuma	342.1	6	3.5	12.0	2.1	1,973	5.0
7	Tokyo-Chiba	38.8	5	2.9	17.2	3.0	1,330	3.4
8	Tokyo-Kofu-Suwa-Gifu-Kusatsu	553.9	8	4.6	39.3	6.9	2,147	5.5
9	Tokyo-Takasaki-Nagaoka-Niigata	352.2	10	5.8	34.6	6.0	2,362	6.0
10	Takasaki-Nagano-Niigata-Akita	493.9	17	9.8	72.1	12.6	2,926	7.4
11	Iwatsuki-Takada-Toyama-Kanazawa	246.7	12	6.9	33.3	5.8	1,814	4.6
12	Nagoya-Sekigahara-Tsuruga-Kanazawa	254.1	5	2.9	10.5	1.8	1,175	3.0
14	Oiwake-Suwa	68.6	1	0.6	0.5	0.1	50	0.1
15	Kyoto-Nara-Hashimoto-Wakayama	144.9	6	3.5	23.0	4.0	1,200	3.0
16	Osaka-Sakai-Kishiwada-Wakayama	69.0	5	2.9	4.9	0.9	1,861	4.7
17	Ogori-Yamaguchi	12.1	1	0.6	6.8	1.2	64	0.2
18	Kyoto-Tottori-Hamada-Yamaguchi	663.1	3	1.7	12.7	2.2	856	2.2
19	Okayama-Katsuyama-Yonago-Matsue	160.1	1	0.6	0.2	0.0	360	0.9
22	Uno-Takamatsu-Tokushima	105.5	1	0.6	1.7	0.3	200	0.5
25	Tashiro-Saga-Takeo-Nagasaki	147.7	5	2.9	15.2	2.7	1,303	3.3
26	Kagoshima-Okinawa	2.4	1	0.6	0.6	0.1	30	0.1
32	Kaida (in Hiroshima)-Kure	17.8	3	1.7	6.8	1.2	893	2.3
33	Takeo-Sasebo	40.2	1	0.6	0.4	0.1	200	0.5
Total		8,227*	173	100.0	573.1	100.0	39,353	100.0

* total distance of all national roads (excludes military road) at the beginning of fiscal year 1934

Source: Public Works Bureau of the Ministry of Interior, *Chokkatsu Koji Nenpo (Annual Report of Public Works Directly Undertaken by the State)*, 1933, 1934; Teichi Endo, "Shōwa 7 nendo Kuni Chokkatsu Kokudo Kairyo Kojini Tsuite" (Road Improvement Works Directly Undertaken by the State in 1932) in *Dorono Kairyo (Road Improvement)*, Vol. 17, No. 7, July, 1935.



Note: ▲, a point of the construction; —①—, a route of the national road and the route number. There are not a record of construction in Hokkaido and Okinawa Prefecture.

Source: Public Works Bureau of the Ministry of Interior, *Chokkatsu Kaji Nenpo (Annual Report of Public Works Directly Undertaken by the State)*, 1933, 1934; Teiichi Endo, "Showa 7 nendo Kuni Chokkatsu Kokudo Kairyo Kojini Tsuite" (Road Improvement Works Directory Undertaken by the State in 1932) in *Dorono Kairyo (Road Improvement)*, Vol. 17, No. 7, July, 1935.

Figure 1 Geographic Distribution of Construction of National Roads (total of three fiscal years)

police officers and the like to be in need of relief; so that at least 70% of total workforce must come from these groups, unless other unavoidable circumstances apply."²⁶⁾ This opened the way for local poor people to find work, and during these three fiscal years (1932 to 34), 2,576,000 man-days were employed in 1932, 5,876,000 in 1933, and 4,259,000 in 1934.²⁷⁾

26) Direction of Social Affairs Bureau, the Ministry of Interior, May 1, 1931, in *ibid.*, p. 101 (in Japanese).

27) *Ibid.*, p. 349 et seq., and Takeo Fujita, *Nippon Shihonshugi to Zaisei (Japanese Capitalism and Public Finance)*, Vol. 2, Jitsugyono Nipponsha, 1949 (in Japanese), p. 200 et seq.

As to material costs, the survey of 1932 shows that of total of 3,600,000 yen, 1,650,000 yen was cement, 670,000 yen was for gravels, 590,000 yen was for steel, and 350,000 was spent for lumber materials, indicating that use of cement and steel products was considerable.²⁸⁾ This created a strong demand for these products and greatly contributed business recovery of that related industry, as Ryoichi Miwa pointed out earlier.²⁹⁾

So then, what were the effects of those road construction works on rural economy? According to a report of the time on social effects of construction of forestry road, the works not only meant cash income for inhabitants but resulted in (1) development of unexploited forests, (2) saving of transportation cost of forestry products and higher value of forest utility, and (3) saving of transportation costs in general and rise of land value.³⁰⁾

To be sure, road construction works were a boon to rural economy, but there were also stories about the entire villages wiped out by new roads.³¹⁾ Tsunao Inomata reported, for instance, of a typical case as follows: "because of many new roads, trucks now come to places where charcoals are made, and those lousy smelling monsters carry out bulks of charcoal one after another. This is a terrible blow to poor farmers who used to make straw bags for charcoal and then transport them to oven, and also to carry charcoal bags down to their village. Even women and children worked like that, and they were thus able to earn some money which was not negligible for them. Now the opportunity was lost for them forever." Thus, new roads brought capitalism to remote villages, changing drastically their lifestyle and economy.

Next, Table 2 shows that large-scale development of major national as well as prefectural roads resulted in a rapid growth of automobile transportation industry. We see, for example, that from 1930 to 1936, growth of the industry in terms of number of companies and amount of their paid-in capital was far above the average of those of all joint stock companies in Japan. Also, we notice that growth of paid-in capital was especially significant in local areas, led by those companies operating in Kyushu and Tohoku regions. The foundation of Japan Express Ltd, in 1937, as a national policy concern bears witness to the emerging importance of vehicle transport

28) Teiichi Endo, *ibid.*, p. 155.

29) The fact that road works and other public works undertaken under the Emergency Relief Measures benefited tremendously manufacturing industry of Japan can be seen in Ryoichi Miwa, "Takahashi Zaiseiki no Keizai Seisaku" (Economic Policy of the Minister of Finance under Takahashi) in the Institute of Social Science, the University of Tokyo, ed., *Facismki no Kokkato Shakai (The Nation and Society during Facist Regime)*, Vol. 2, Tokyo University Press, 1979 (in Japanese).

30) Akita Forestry Branch Office, *Kokuyu Rinya Jimoto Nosan Gyosonni Okeru Kyunojigyo Narabini Sono Kokano Gaiyo (Public Works for Relief to Inhabitants in the National Forests and Outline of Their Effects)*, 1975 (in Japanese), p. 6.

31) Tsunao Inomata, *Kyubono Noson (Impoverished Villages)*, 1934, reprinted edition in 1978, Nobunkyo (in Japanese), p. 334.

Table 2 Growth of Automobile Transportation Industry and Public Works Contracting Business

District	Automobile Transportation Company					Public Works Contracting Company				
	Number of companies			Percent		Number of companies			Percent	
	1930	1933	1936	1930	1936	1930	1933	1936	1930	1936
Hokkaido	56	86	103	100	184	40	54	62	100	155
Tohoku	83	121	192	100	231	26	49	90	100	346
Kanto (excludes Tokyo)	140	177	216	100	154	71	129	149	100	210
Hokuriku	79	84	115	100	146	35	56	80	100	230
Tosan Tokai	177	230	290	100	164	106	158	172	100	162
Kinki	276	411	623	100	226	174	251	327	100	188
Chugoku	115	147	194	100	169	31	40	57	100	184
Shikoku	75	85	101	100	135	14	28	33	100	236
Kyushu	76	167	218	100	287	28	52	81	100	289
Tokyo	104	161	242	100	233	227	312	388	100	171
Total	1,181	1,669	2,294	100	194	752	1,129	1,439	100	191
All Industry	51,910	71,196	87,511	100	169					
Amount of paid-in capital (Million Yen)	81.3	93.2	138.9	100	171	113.1	122.4	159.1	100	141
All Industry (Billion Yen)	19.6	20.0	24.0	100	122					

Source: Statistics Section of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, *Kaisyu Tokeihyo (Statistics of Companies)*, 1930, 1933, 1936.

industry.³²⁾ The table is interesting also because it shows rapid growth of public works contracting companies and this increased at a rate even higher than that of automobile transportation companies mainly in local areas. Of course, these contractors did not live on road construction alone, but it seems certain that their success owed a lot to the Public Works Program for Relief and this in turn allowed them to penetrate into regional economic structure.

b) River Improvement Works

The most important characteristic of river improvement works undertaken as a part of the Public Works Program for Relief is that in contrast to works in the past, medium to small rivers were now became eligible for improvement work. Previously, works on large rivers were directly undertaken by the state. Under the Emergency Relief Measures, however, the government appropriated an amount of 61,662,000 yen in three fiscal years, and the amount was used to subsidize 50% of costs of improve-

32) In 1935, bus traffic represented 31% of total passengers utilizing land transport. In the same year, automobiles transported 64% of total tonnage of freight on land. Road Transportation Bureau of the Ministry of Construction, *Doro Tokei Nenpo 1957 (Road Statistic Year-book)*, 1957 (in Japanese). For more details, refer to Ando and Matsuyoshi, *ibid.*

ment works on 39 medium to small rivers, apart from acceleration of works directly undertaken by the state. The subsidies were to be used at the discretion of prefectural governments in charge. Furthermore, those works undertaken by local municipalities now became eligible for the state subsidy of 75% of costs.³³⁾

As to the impact of those river improvement works over rural economy, the new works were mostly those called "high water river work" which consists of dikes, embankments and barrages to allow construction of dams. High dikes were effective to prevent floods, but it had a far-reaching consequence on the traditional orders of irrigation. That is to say, the traditional irrigation system at Japanese village was so-called "natural down-flow type" built around those medium to small rivers, and this usually gave the right of irrigation control to the village community and to landowners in particular.³⁴⁾ The advent of modern system, however, required construction of watergates and pumping stations or new water ways alongside the river, which meant a significant change of outside environment for the traditional order of irrigation system.

In fact, a number of conflict arose in conjunction with river improvement. According to Taichi Uzaki, disputes over agriculture-oriented and other uses of water occurred most frequently out of new river improvement works. He stated, quoting a study report made in April, 1935 and titled *Examples of Damages to Agricultural Irrigation caused by River Improvement*, that "in total, there were 47 cases of such damages: 22 due to the drop of river bed and 6 due to alteration of river course, all causing shortage of irrigation water, 8 cases where irrigation system was but by salination, 8 cases resulting in insufficient drainage, 4 cases where irrigation channel was cut off completely, and 7 other cases."³⁵⁾

The biggest motive behind the development of high-water system, which forced fundamental change in the traditional irrigation system, was of course the need for hydro-electric power. Electric power companies always had advantage over users of irrigation system in their dispute regarding water rights.³⁶⁾ In considering these facts, it would be reasonable to conclude that the river improvement works consistently promoted shift of control power over water rights from landowners to electric power companies, thereby contributing to changes in the traditional orders of agricultural irrigation in those concerned areas.

Lastly, a few words will be in order regarding the systematic character of the public works which the Ministry of Interior undertook for improvement of roads, rivers and port facilities. The Emergency Relief Measures completed its mission on schedule in three fiscal years of implementation. However, the Public Works Council

33) Viz. *History of Civil Engineering in Japan*, *ibid.*, p. 13.

34) An example is Taichi Uzaki, *Nogyo Doboku Gyosei (Public Administration and Public Works)*, Shozanbo, 1941 (in Japanese), p. 130. See also Yozo Watanabe, *Nogyo Suiriken no Kenkyu (Study of Agricultural Water Rights)*, Tokyo University Press, 1954 (in Japanese).

35) Taichi Uzaki, *ibid.*, p. 213.

36) Yozo Watanabe, *ibid.*, p. 452.

established in 1933 developed the Second Plan for Road Improvement and the Second River Improvement Plan, and these were able to carry forward the systematic investment of the state in the social means of labor.³⁷⁾

IV Practice of Public Works Undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

a) Outline of Works

The Ministry was in charge of three different types of public works, which were those on arable land, those concerning forestry (forestation, sand dune prevention, forestry road construction, etc.) and works for construction of fishing port facilities. For the purpose of this study, we will exclude the last two types and discussion will be made only for public works on arable land. In this area again, there were several items including those large-scale 2-year reclamation (work in excess of five cho = 2.45 acres \times 5), trunk irrigation/drainage line improvement (involving beneficiary area in excess of 500 cho = 2.45 acres \times 500), small-scale reclamation (less than 5 cho, excluding restoration works), smaller scale irrigation/drainage improvement (beneficiary area less than 500 cho), underdrainages, construction of auxiliary facilities such as watergates and bridges, and so on. Because of this, the entities who undertook these works included not only prefectural governments but municipalities, arable land readjustment associations, irrigation associations and even individuals.

The state provided high subsidies to these works, and in addition, offered low-cost loans to alleviate local burden. The Public Works Program for Relief was a major step forward to promote the whole scheme of increasing agricultural subsidy. According to Naraomi Imamura, the Ministry's budget for public works grew not only in amounts but also in numbers of subsidy payments, because they were now available to smaller undertakings.³⁸⁾ Simultaneously, the manner of financing underwent a significant change, in that the Deposit Bureau of the Ministry of Finance was now authorized to extend loans directly to local municipalities without going over the traditional channels via Nippon Kangyo Bank, Noko Bank or Hokkaido Takushoku Bank. Deferment of repayment and interest subsidy also became available with a view to promote public works by means of financial assistance.³⁹⁾

37) Okasumikai, *Naimushoshi (History of the Ministry of Interior)*, Vol. 2, Chiho Zaimu Kyokai, 1971 (in Japanese), p. 9 et seq. Harumaru Inoue states that the Public Works Program for Relief allowed construction of national roads to be done in a systematical way, and this marked an epoch in the history of automobile road construction in Japan. See Inoue, *Nippon Shihonshugino Hattento Nogyo oyobi Nosei (Development of Japanese Capitalism, Agriculture and Agrarian Policy)*, Chuo Koronsha, 1957 (in Japanese), p. 365.

38) Naraomi Imamura, *Hojokinto Nogyo • Noson (Subsidy and Agricultures/Village)*, Ieno Hikari Kyokai, 1979 (in Japanese), p. 110.

39) For further details, see Shintaro Yoshida, "Takahashi Zaiseikano Chiho Zaisei" (Local Finance under the Fiscal Policy of the Ministry of Finance during Takahashi's Ministry) in Kohachiro Takahashi, et., *Nippon Kindaikano Kenkyu (Study of Modernization of Japan)*, Vol. 2, Tokyo University Press, 1976 (in Japanese), p. 421

Table 3 Results of the Public Works on Arable Land (total of three fiscal years)

Item	Subsidy payment		Number of works		Beneficiary area	
	Thousand yen	Percent	Number	Percent	Cho*	Percent
large scale 2-year reclamation	8,019	14.7	1,613	1.0	18,112	0.9
small scale reclamation	11,273	20.6	77,163 (4,542**)	46.1	96,751 (59,260**)	5.0
trunk irrigation/drainage line improvement	6,255	11.4	148	0.1	164,745	8.5
smaller scale irrigation/drainage improvement	12,952	23.7	29,912	17.9	802,212	41.4
underdrainage	1,546	2.8	10,335	6.2	12,442	0.6
construction of auxiliary facilities	14,671	26.8	48,266	28.7	844,112	43.6
total	54,716	100.0	167,437	100.0	1,938,374	100.0

* 1 cho=2.45 acres ** restoration work

Source: Agricultural Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, *Dai Juichiji Kochi Kakucho Kairyō Jigyō Yoran (Summary of the 11th Program for Expansion and Improvement of Arable Land)*, 1936.

Table 4 Results of the Agricultural Public Works by District (total of three fiscal years) (cho=2.45 acres)

District	2-year reclamation		Small reclamation*		Trunk irrigation/ drainage	Smaller irrigation/ drainage	Underdrainage	Auxiliary facilities
	Ricefields	Fields	Ricefields	Fields	Beneficiary area	Beneficiary area	Beneficiary area	Beneficiary area
Hokkaido	0	0	0	5,190	0	43,955	981	1,971
Tohoku	2,683	2,537	3,663	4,752	30,839	168,975	2,658	150,209
Kanto (includes Tokyo)	1,492	2,175	1,600	7,285	89,977	95,719	2,225	180,631
Hokuriku	694	309	845	383	13,963	56,337	626	93,059
Tosan Tokai	698	1,873	920	2,989	38,503	65,678	918	161,511
Kinki	179	1,186	190	1,781	8,525	80,839	369	60,485
Chugoku	305	801	317	939	16,259	79,903	1,792	76,442
Shikoku	184	566	166	1,665	3,167	57,005	146	41,578
Kyushu	686	2,052	1,248	3,925	10,826	79,240	2,986	85,807
Okinawa	0	178	25	156	0	795	0	4,154
Total	6,921	11,677	8,974	29,065	212,059	728,446	12,701	855,847

* excludes restoration works

Source: Agricultural Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, *Kochi Kakucho Kairyō Jigyō Yoran (Summary of Program for Expansion and Improvement of Arable Land)*, 1934, 1935, 1936.

b) *Results of Undertaking*

Results accomplished under the agricultural public works program are summarized in Table 3. Distinction between the "areal undertakings" (reclamation and underdrainage for instance) and "linear undertakings" (drainage improvement and construction of auxiliary facilities) apart, the table shows eloquently the whole scale of undertakings regarding cultivated land spaces, attaining almost one third of the country's total cultivated area at that time. The number of works undertaken reached 167,000 in three fiscal years. In considering the distressed status of Japanese farming villages in general at that time, such a policy of scattered spending, including those under the rural public works program, was in fact a necessity. Furthermore, the table shows that 75% of the amount spent as subsidy was applied to small-scale works, and that individuals (42.4%) and associations (33.4%) accounted for the absolute majority of number of works undertaken.⁴⁰⁾ This would mean that the policy was quite effective to restore confidence among farmers.

Next, Table 4 illustrates regional characteristics of the agricultural public works program. First, we notice that in terms of square measures, reclamation of fields stood above that of ricefields, except in Tohoku and Hokuriku areas where monoculture of rice was prevalent. Also, the average square measure per one small-scale reclamation work in Hokuriku was 1.6 cho (2.45 acres \times 1.6), which is far large than those in Tohoku and Kyushu (0.7 cho on the average). Second, while construction of trunk irrigation/drainage lines occupied an important part of the works done in Eastern Japan, much of the works undertaken in Western Japan were irrigation/drainage lines of smaller scale. Third, whereas underdraining works were extensively done in Kyushu, Tohoku and Kanto areas, they were not so frequent in Hokuriku and Kinki. Thus, the public works done by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry showed considerable diversity among different regions in Japan.

c) *Impact of Public Works on Rural Economy*

Initially, these public works had the main aim of distributing wages for the benefit of rural farmers. In this regard, the data published by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry indicate that during these three fiscal years, aggregate total number of workers employed for these works attained 112,530,000, who received the total wages of 82,140,000 yen or 73% of the total cost of works.⁴¹⁾ In principle, the workers were to be recruited from among the poor and registered jobless people in the region, although in smaller scale works, the undertaking entities were often individuals, and they tended to employ their own family members.⁴²⁾

40) Agricultural Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, *ibid.*

41) *Ibid.*

42) Agricultural Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, *Jikyoku Kyokyu Koichi Kankei Nogyo Doboku Jigyono Gaiyo Narabini Sanko Jitsurei (The Outline and Some Actual Examples of Public and Irrigation Works for Promotion of Agriculture under the Emergency Relief Program, 1934 (in Japanese).*

43) Akita Forestry Branch Office, *ibid.*, p. 34.

Then, how were the wages spent by the farmers? According to a survey made on spending of the wage income at Yamase Village in Akita Prefecture, 60% of the income was used as living expenses, followed by repayment of loans and payment of taxes (5% each).⁴⁴⁾ Another report made by the Akita District Forestry Office indicated that the wage income contributed to reduce number of schoolchildren coming to school without lunch, as well as to increase rate of school attendance and participation to postal life insurance schemes. Also, more people were able to pay for their medical and electrical bills in arrearage.⁴⁴⁾ It is then clear that the wage income earned by those poor people hardly remained in their pockets, quickly consumed by daily necessities, taxes and repayment of their debts. The wage income as no more than a temporary relief to the poor, who were in constant need of some bywork to live on. In short, the relief program offered little solution to their chronic fear of complete destitution.

Cost of land acquisition was not a significant portion of the total expenditures for the public works. In the case of Hyogo Prefecture, it amounted to no more than 10% of total costs, much less than material costs.⁴⁵⁾

Next, we need to consider ultimate results of those reclaimed field and irrigation/drainage systems built by the vast number of farmers. We have already seen that the most part of reclamation, which aimed extension of arable land for increased output, was undertaken by individuals, and that in Tohoku and Hokuriku regions, reclamation meant more often extension of rice cultivation rather types of agriculture. An important question here is who were those individuals and where they stood in the hierarchy or class of farmers. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive data to provide direct answer to the question. There are, however, some information which gives as if partially some ideas concerning this aspect.

First, in the case of reclamation works undertaken by non-individual entities such as field readjustment associations and village municipalities, the fields thus created newly were often leased to these "expert" farmers.⁴⁶⁾ Second, in Hyogo Prefecture, most of small-scale reclamation produced fields for crops other than rice, where orchard trees, tobacco, peppermint and other "commercial" crops were planted.⁴⁷⁾ This reflects growth of market-oriented agriculture around large cities, which in Tohoku and Hokuriku, rice remained the only viable crop, and the share of rice field continued to increase.

With regard to the effect of new irrigation systems on rural economy, we notice above all that they contributed to increase of output per square measure. According

44) Ibid., p. 7 et seq.

45) Economic Department of Hyogo Prefecture, *Showa 8 nendo Noson Shinko Nogyo Dobokujigyo Jisshi Gaiyo (The Summary of Public Works Undertaken in Fiscal Year 1933 for Development of Farming Village)*, 1935 (in Japanese), was used as the source of data cited here.

46) Ibid., Agricultural Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, *Jikyoku Kyokyu Kochi Kankei Nogyo Doboku Jigyono Gaikyo oyobi Sanko Jitsurei*.

47) Economic Department of Hyogo Prefecture, *ibid.*, pp. 14-18.

to a survey made by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in the Eastern Japan, improvement of irrigation systems resulted in an increase of 130% per square measures (in terms of price), and 162% in case of improvement of underdrainage.⁴⁸⁾ In Saga Prefecture, where rice production reached the highest level after the Great Depression, more than 20% of total arable land benefitted from construction of small-scale irrigation/drainage systems, and it is certain that this was one of the reasons for achievement of the success at this prefecture, known as "Saga Stage".⁴⁹⁾ Moreover, it was mainly those part owners of 1 to 3 cho who played a key role in this process. Clearly, there occurred disintegration of the traditional village hierarchy due to the public works. The land improvement was possible because of the works of rural farmers, and the improvement in agricultural productivity triggered the disintegration of old class system, of which Saga Prefecture was a typical example.

V Conclusion

We have so far considered separately each of the public works administered by the Ministry of Interior and those sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. In conclusion, it would be in order to make an overall assessment of both types of the public works to get a whole picture of the Public Works Program for Relief to Farmers.

First of all, the Public Works Program for Relief were remarkable in their scale which surpassed all the earlier agricultural undertakings of the Japanese government. They realized, for the first time, basis for rural development and introduction of modern civilization into rural villages. In this process, the public works initiated by the Ministry of Interior tried to bring into contact cities and villages, capital and rural economy, while those undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry developed extensively basic infrastructures needed to upgrade agricultural productivity of rural economy. Along with road improvement, the public works within villages formed a new basis of rural communities in Japan, and this experience was utilized again in the postwar period. In this sense, the relief works constitute an essential part in the governmental policy of rural development.

Second, the Public Works Program for Relief were greatly marked by their regional characteristics. Because they were implemented extensively, many of them were small in scale, but their political and economical effects were none the less significant.

48) Ibid., Agricultural Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, *Jikyoku Kyokyu Kochi Kankei Nogyo Doboku Jigyo no Gaikyo Narabini Sanko Jitsurei*. The survey was made at seven locations for each, in the year 1933.

49) For "Saga Stage" refer to Katsujiro Yamada, *Komoto Mayuno Keizai Kozo (The Economic Structure of Rice and Silk Cocoon Production)*, Iwanami Shoten, 1942 and Sadame Tanaka, "Sagaken Nogyoron" (Study of Agriculture in Saga Prefecture), originally published in Kyushu University, *Keizaigaku Kenkyu (Journal of Political Economy)*, Vol. 9, No. 3 and 4, 1939, reprinted edition, Nobunkyo, in 1978 (in Japanese).

These relatively minor undertakings were by no means standardized, but highly diverse due to local conditions such as level of development of commercial production and natural environment, as seen from those works done in conjunction with improvement or reclamation of arable land. However, we should not consider the diversity alone as the fundamental characteristics of the Public Works Program for Relief in general. As the example of construction of national roads suggests, development of major roads took place in a fairly consistent and well-organized manner. In addition to it, contrary to the "relief to rural village" slogan, priority was given to four major industrialized zones and to large cities. For this reason, construction of national roads tended to expand, rather than diminish, uneven regional development.

Third, the massive spending under the Public Works Program for Relief by way of public works provided a temporary relief to poverty stricken population, but it fell far short of resulting in a sustained development of rural economy to bring permanent solution to the problem. On the contrary, it provided opportunities for the industrial capital to expand domestic market for their product and to penetrate into the rural economy on the basis of the new infrastructures established through the public works.

Fourth, we must not forget that the new social means of labor and agricultural product means paved the way for a gradual but sustained transformation of traditional structure of rural community, with the result that the poor became even more so. This process involved two different aspects. Those public works sponsored by the Ministry of Interior tended to act as an external factor to cause transformation of the conventional structure of rural communities, while the initiative taken by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry became an internal factor to promote disintegration of the traditional class structure within the communities by means of investment coming from the state.

Thus, the Public Works Program for Relief to Farmers constituted an approach to create basic infrastructure for improvement of agricultural productivity both in material as well as social context. Yet, the governmental initiative by no means provided a real and permanent relief to poor people in the depressed communities, but it involved a strong possibility to result in a systematic reproduction and expansion of poverty in the rural community. We can notice that the state government itself was not unaware of the danger, in as much as it started to implement simultaneously the "Movement for Reconstruction of Rural Economy" as a permanent policy in order to complement the Public Works Program for Relief to Farmers which was no more than an emergency measure to provide temporary income to poor farmers.