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THE QUESTION OF POPULATION IN JAPAN

Those who discuss the question of Japan's population to-day as in the case of those who discuss the general questions of social problems, can be divided, into two groups: first, those who would solve the question under the existing social and economic systems, and secondly those who believe that a fundamental change in those systems is the primary prerequisite of the solution of the population question. The latter group are of the opinion that the question will be solved naturally under new social and economic systems. Although the existence of various defects in the prevailing social and economic organizations is incontestable, a sudden and fundamental alteration of those historic systems can never be carried out without bloodshed. Such an idea can never be regarded as practicable. Gradual change is the only principle that can be adopted in solving this kind of a question. Such a pressing problem as that of population in relation to food, or to employment, cannot be solved by impracticable ideal schemes. Those problems are not subjects for the visionary arguments of idealists who transcend "time" and "place" in their discussion. They are questions that must be dealt with from a practical standpoint. I am therefore one of those who would treat the question of population as a living question requiring a practical and realistic treatment. I shall first dwell on the question of population in its relation food, and then take up the question of employment.

Those who discuss the question of population in relation to food can be divided into two groups. First, those who predicate their argument on the assumption that the volume

of food cannot be increased, and secondly, those who hold exactly the opposite opinion. Those who belong to the former group generally aim at a limitation of population, but they can also be divided into two groups: those who would limit population through the restraint of sexual desire, Malthus being their leading representative; and those who advocate the gratification of sexual impulses as for example the neo-Malthusians or the believers in Sangerism. While those people include in their theory such things as the protection of motherhood and the raising of superior children, their ultimate object is to limit population through birth control.

All schemes for the solution of the problem through the limitation of population, regardless of opinions concerning sexual desires may be termed "negative policies"; while those which aim to solve the same question through the increase of food may be called "positive policies."

A negative policy of limiting population can be justified only when all positive policies are impossible of realization. Many of those who discuss this question in our country support negative policies, not because they have exhausted the possibilities of positive policies, but because they are merely imitating western ideas, or propaganda. It is clear that a great mistake is being committed by those who are trying to implant in Japan something which does not fit the peculiar circumstances of the country.

I am utterly opposed to any negative policy of birth control in view of the present condition of our country. Individuals may practice such a policy on their own initiative when pressed by necessity but they should not be urged by others to do so. And, when the time has arrived for the adoption of such a negative policy, I would prefer a plan based on the self-denial of sexual desire, rather than one based on its gratification. If society is to be relieved of the burden of over-population the self-denial of sexual desire and the postponement of marriage should be urged. Nor will this be impossible when society has progressed enough

and men's moral ideas have sufficiently advanced. The negative policy of controlling population will inevitably be accompanied by many hidden social and moral evils, inasmuch as it leaves individuals free to indulge in sexual gratification, while attempting to eradicate these evils. True, this policy includes such objectives as the protection of motherhood and the raising of superior children; but these are a matter of "may be" and cannot be regarded as assured results in the light of contemporary statistical science. We have no conclusive evidence that mothers having many children are physically weaker than those having few children. On the contrary, there are many facts showing the opposite conclusion. Nor can we say with any certitude that the children of mothers who have given birth to many children are physically weaker than those of mothers having given birth to few children. Moreover, it is often seen that children having bad moral tendencies are brought up by parents having comparatively few children, who have been spoiled by their parents. It is evident then that the argument advanced in favour of the policy under discussion does not command a general acceptance.

At any rate, a negative policy of population fails to take into consideration, the existing condition of our country, and it is at most a faithful copying of neo-Malthusianism or Sangerism. I am of the opinion that the question of how to increase the volume of the food products of the country is more important than the question of limiting population.

The following are the four means of securing enough food for a larger population:

1. Expanding the area of arable land by reclaiming marshes and cultivating waste lands.
2. Expanding the area of the rice land by readjustment or rearrangement of the paddy fields so as to have fewer divisions, or paths, between them.
3. More intensive farming by effecting proper changes in such things as the selection of seeds, trans-

planting, fertilization, harvesting, and the proper means and time for storing the crops.

4. To carry out the above-mentioned methods in the colonial possessions as well as in the mother country.

There is in Japan's Mainland and in the Hokkaido approximately two million *chobu* of uncultivated land, and this area constitutes one third of the total area of the cultivated land in Japan. Of the former area, about 700,000 *chobu* can be turned into rice fields. This certainly shows that there is much room for an increase in the amount of food products. It may be said, however, that our farmers are not in a position to cultivate this wild land even if it really exists; that they would have cultivated it had it been economical, and that the fact that they have not cultivated it proves that its cultivation has been impossible under the prevailing circumstances. The argument entirely misses the mark inasmuch as so gigantic a work as the cultivation of such extensive waste lands cannot be carried out by the farmers alone but should be done by the State. It is like the steel industry which is undertaken by the State in order to help the development of the industry regardless of its immediate profit or loss. Nay, the cultivation of waste land is more important than the development of the steel industry, because the vital existence of the nation is dependent upon the question of food supply. For this reason, the State should shoulder the expense of cultivating waste lands which, after cultivation, should be disposed of in order to further the interests of small land holders.

Moreover, there are many who believe that Japanese farming with its long history of nearly three thousand years has reached the pinnacle of intensive cultivation and that for this reason there is no room for further development. It should be noted that this idea is entirely erroneous. True, our farming has a long history, but our farmers have notoriously neglected the studies into the adaptability of seeds to different soils, the effect of different times of gather-

ing seeds upon their quality, the relations between different cereals and fertilisers, and between the nature of soils and that of fertilisers, the relations between the cost of production and the value of crops, and other experiments in scientific farming. Our farming has not yet reached the end of its development. This is most clearly proved by the fact that the average amount of rice per *tan* of land in the country is about one *koku* eight *to*. In some parts of the country where rice cultivation has been improved, the average rice crop per *tan* is between three *koku* and four *koku*. It is evident that, should similar improvement be made throughout the country, the volume of our food supply would be greatly increased. Plans for increasing food products through an increase in cultivated land have been loudly proclaimed, but similar plans through more intensive farming have been unduly disregarded.

It is only recently that the development of farming in our colonial possessions has been undertaken. The Government-General of Chosen with its new plan for increasing the rice crop has made a notable start toward relieving the food shortage of the country, but there is much room for further development of rice farming both in Korea and Formosa.

At any rate, it is foolish indeed to attempt to resort to a negative policy of limiting population, without first directing attention the power of the nation to increase the volume of the country's food products especially when there is much room for such an increase. Some will say that the attempt to increase the volume of food products cannot be expected to solve the question of population fundamentally, and that such a policy is not adapted to the distant future. They will say that the annual increase of something like 700,000 or 800,000 in our population cannot be met by the mere increase of food products, and that the limitation of our population is the only permanently effective policy that can be adopted. To these I reply as follows: In the first place, it is clear no one can predict that our population will increase at the present rate for another hundred years. Let

us take the figures of some recent years in this connection. During the five years, 1911-1915, the rate of increase in population per one thousand was at first between 16 and 14 and the rate decreased to 12. It is impossible then to forecast the future rate of increase. Any forecast will be as fantastic as that of Malthus who declared that the population of the world if unchecked would be doubled in four and one half centuries. Since we cannot predict the condition of the distant future, it is impossible for us to formulate a policy for that distant future. All who have intellectual consciences should be on their guard against making such a Utopian prophecy. Those who treat of social and economic phenomena must deal with those that are likely to happen during the coming thirty or forty years and the policy adopted in the light of this forecast should be that of the succeeding thirty or forty years. There is no other way for those who are attempting to treat the policy of population with intellectual honesty.

I shall next consider the relations between the increase of population and the question of employment. The question of population has a close relationship with that of food supply on the one hand and with that of employment on the other. We cannot expect to employ our surplus population in agriculture. The countries which export agricultural products (such as Australia and South American states) may be able to furnish much employment in the agricultural field, but our country whose farm products are consumed at home cannot give agricultural employment to her population except in a very limited way. The real cause of the agricultural problems is traceable to this fact. The disputes between landlords and tenants are not based upon any class consciousness; they arise because of the fact that the whole income from agriculture is insufficient for both of them. The question of distribution of income has been the chief basis of the tenant disputes in our country. Since the income that farmers are now getting is insufficient for them, we cannot expect our agriculture

to absorb new population, unless some extraordinary thing should happen. Of course the cultivation of waste land, as part of the plan we have dwelt on already, may give employment to some in a very limited way, but it is plain that agriculture in our country cannot take care of any large increase in population.

I am of the opinion that it is to our industry and commerce that we must look to find employment for our ever-increasing surplus population. But this means that there should be perfect cooperation of both capital and labour with nature. Unless such cooperation is effected, our industries will ultimately face destruction, which would bring disaster to all social and economic institutions and make impossible any solution of the question of population in relation to food or of the question of giving employment to surplus population. Our urgent task then is to establish this cooperation so much to be desired. We will have to resort to diplomatic channels in order to secure from neighbouring countries the raw material needed for our industries. For the cooperation of capital we must encourage thrift among the people. I cannot share the opinion of those who believe that there is no room for the exercise of thrift in our country. Experience shows that more thrift has been found in impecunious countries than in wealthy countries and during hard times rather than in prosperous periods. This is to be explained by the fact that, whereas prosperity slackens the national spirit of a people, depression arouses it. I can cite one example by way of illustration. Our easy-term government insurance is the best example. This insurance, which can be regarded as indicating the thrift of our people, did not amount to much during the boom years of 1918, 1919, and 1920, but it increased steadily as the prosperity declined. The latest figures show that the total amount of insurance in force is estimated at 1,200,000,000 yen and of premium already paid, at 140,000,000 yen. The total amount of postal savings deposited in small amounts by comparatively poor people also is estimated at something

like 1,200,000,000 yen. The argument that there is no more room for the exercise of thrift, therefore, is not true. It may be said that those who advance this argument can also simplify their living and cut down daily expenses. Thus, if the sources of capital are carefully developed through national thrift, the interest rate of money will be lowered sooner or later and thereby permit the development of industry.

As to labour I am also in favour of gradual reform. The idea of class struggle will ultimately lead to social and economic revolutions through violence. But an attempt to eradicate the evils of capitalism through violence would bring about disastrous results. Moreover, all the big nations of Europe and America with the exception of Soviet Russia are attempting to develop their national power through cooperation between capital and labour. It is often said that the Communistic element in the British Labour Party is getting more and more powerful. But at its general convention held in October, last year, Mr. Williams, who presided over the meeting, emphasized the need of cooperation between capital and labour. He said that the existing industrial war resembles a real war, and that what each would accomplish through hostile action against each other would be merely the intensifying of their bitter feelings. He called it a foolish thing for the Labour Party to regard all employers as its enemies. He pointed out that there are many employers who are as honest as the workers and who would act justly; and he urged that the British Party discard its traditional policy and adopt the aims of American labour, namely, higher wages and greater efficiency, for the purpose of seeking industrial peace through mutual cooperation. Mr. Williams's words are full of significance. We must remember that hostility between capital and labour is not only detrimental to each, but also jeopardises the industries of a nation very materially. Nor is it difficult to remove the evils of our prevailing system of industry gradually without resorting to any radical methods. Further-

more, the evils of capitalism in our country are not incurable because industry in Japan has not reached that stage of development which it has attained in the advanced countries of Europe and America. It is evident that those who advocate revolutionary violence by intensifying hostility between capital and labour in our country are making a great blunder, when it is remembered that the more advanced countries are trying to better their industrial conditions through gradual, reformative methods.

It is not an easy task by any means to bring about this cooperation between nature, capital and labour in our country where the gifts of nature are scarce, the amount of capital is very limited, and labour efficiency is low. But at any rate we must try to bring about this cooperation if we are to expect the national development of our country; there is no other way to prepare our country for future prosperity. When this cooperation has opened up an opportunity for the expansion of commerce and industry, it will not be very difficult to give employment to surplus population. This cooperation is an indispensable means for the development of national power, even when there is no pressing question of over-population. But the population question makes the cooperation all the more indispensable. There was no cry of unemployment during the European War when there was a great boom in our industry and commerce; nay, there was a scarcity of labour both in cities and in rural districts. Although war time conditions cannot be cited as an example of the activities of normal times, the instance just shown can be taken as indicating the close relationship existing between the prosperity of industry and commerce on the one hand and the question of caring for over-population on the other. The fact that the comparatively small area of urban districts can usually support a greater population than rural districts is due to the activities of commerce and industry in cities. There is a vast difference between regarding the capacity of a country for absorbing population in view of the facts just mentioned, and regarding only the

total area of the country and its capacity for supporting a larger population per square mile. We must, therefore, direct our efforts at developing both agriculture and other industries for the purpose of getting an increased amount of foodstuffs and employment, if we are to solve the question of over-population.

I shall next consider the question of emigration in connection with the question of population. Some people laugh at solving the question of over-population by emigration and colonization. They say it would be impossible to dispose of an annual increase of something like 700,000 or 800,000 by these methods. As the total amount of population disposed of by these two methods during the past half century is less than the increase of population in two years, it is folly to expect that these methods will solve the question of over-population. However, it must be admitted that no one who advocates emigration and colonization as means of solving the population question ever believes that it would be possible to send out to other countries or to colonize more than half a million persons every year. Nor does he pay any respect to the argument that the failure of the past attempts at emigration and colonization would be repeated in the future. It is evident that such a great task as emigration and colonization can not be effected through exhortation by speech and writing which has been the only means used during the past half a century. In the past, the colonial enterprise of our country has never received any substantial aid from the State. It has made its achievement through the personal efforts of the people themselves. No Nation, in fact, has been so indifferent to the colonial enterprise as our own. The encouragement given to emigration by Italy should be a lesson to our own government.

The ardent desire of the people themselves for colonial enterprise has been chiefly responsible for its past achievements, and I am sure the success would have been much greater had the State given aid to the enterprise. Although no one believes that State aid alone will be effective in

disposing of the annual increase in our population, such aid will greatly help in the solution of the problem. Furthermore, the colonial enterprise would necessarily increase the importation of raw materials and the supply of foodstuffs. In other words, colonization does not mean the transportation of people only. If it is done properly, it will surely result in an expansion of markets and of trade.

The time for argument has passed. We are facing the necessity of effecting a solution of the problem. Unless we resort to extreme methods which would destroy the foundation of our social and economic organizations, the methods outlined above are the only ones that can solve the questions of population in relation to food supply and to employment.

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