

LABOR CONDITIONS IN JAPAN

BY

SHUICHI HARADA

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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PREFACE

THIS book deals mainly with the relationship between economic and social conditions, their effects upon the welfare of the working class and the trend of the labor movement in Japan.

The trend of the labor movement will be controlled by two factors, first, the future development of capitalism in Japan and, second, the growth of a consciousness on the part of the workers of the obstacles to be overcome if they are to attain the goal which they themselves set up.

The first part of this book describes and analyses the economic conditions of present-day Japan. The first chapter, dealing with the historical development of capitalism in Japan, shows poverty as characteristic of the economic status of the Tokugawa régime. This poverty and the practice of thrift which resulted from it and which was carried to an extreme by every class in those days and during the years following the political restoration (1868), have had their bearing upon the present standard of living in Japan, and the closely related problem of wages. The paternalism of the feudal period still exerts its influence on the relationship between the employer and the employee in present-day, industrial Japan. The payment of wages to the strikers during the period of striking, the payment of strike expenses by the employer, and the payment of discharge compensation to workers even though the discharge was due to strikes can only be accounted for as reflections of paternalism. The family system and the structure of community life in Japan have a close relation to population and unemployment. An under-

standing of feudal Japan is, therefore, a prerequisite to the understanding of modern Japan and her problems.

The economic life of Japan is largely dependent upon foreign countries, for Japan is short of raw materials (chapter two) and has insufficient industrial capital (chapter three). In disposing of manufactured articles, she is entirely dependent upon foreign markets (chapter four). These are some of the characteristics of the economic life of Japan, and they are also limiting factors for the development of industries in Japan. Economic conditions such as these are closely connected with the welfare of the working class, because the dependence of economic life upon foreign countries deprives Japan of industrial stability and threatens the maintenance of security of employment and of wages. The agrarian unrest (chapter five) and overpopulation (chapter six) are major internal economic problems which affect the welfare of the laboring class directly and indirectly. Overpopulation directly affects employment and wages in general, while the agrarian unrest due to the poverty and the hardships of peasant life stimulates their migration to urban and industrial centers, causing an over-supply of industrial workers and thereby affecting employment and wages in particular. The peasant class, when shifted to the industrial field, is made up of unskilled workers, accustomed to a lower standard of living, and they may be utilised by the employer to check the improvement of labor conditions and the progress of the labor movement. The migration of Korean workers and Chinese laborers into Japan is also discussed (chapter six) in connection with the problem of over-supply of labor.

The second part of this book deals with labor conditions in general. Chapter seven gives facts in regard to the workers classified according to sex, age and industries. The conditions of workers, including more than 500,000 women workers in dormitories attached to the factories, and their relation

to the labor movement are discussed. The unemployment situation as revealed by the unemployment census of 1925 is also included in this chapter. The relationship between wages and prices (chapter eight), the hours of work, and the factors limiting the adoption of an eight-hour work-day in Japan are treated in chapter nine. The cost of living for workers' families in Japan, considered in chapter eight, assists to an understanding of living conditions of workers in Japan, and the distribution of items of family expenditures partly reflects the influence of social conditions peculiar to Japan. In the light of this background the behavior of labor is chronologically traced (chapter ten). First the historical development of the labor movement in Japan and the oscillation of the movement between radical and reform policies are briefly mentioned. The political activity of labor, which began only in 1925 as the result of the adoption of manhood suffrage, is introduced in chapter eleven. The attitude of employers toward labor (chapter twelve) and of the government toward industrial relations (chapter thirteen) have very important bearings upon the future development of the labor movement and space is given to their discussion.

After a review of economic and social conditions as basic factors influencing the behavior of workers, employers and the government, conclusions are reached (chapter fourteen) including a few constructive suggestions adapted to labor in Japan.

Statistical data in this study should not be taken as showing the exact conditions. The science of statistics is not well developed in Japan and numerical data published in Japan are often inaccurate and inadequate. Although the data published by the Government of Japan and the Bank of Japan are two of the most reliable sources, and most of the tables referred to in this study are derived from government reports, yet their reproduction in this book is intended only as an indication of the general conditions.

I acknowledge with gratitude the valuable suggestions given by Professor Henry R. Seager of Columbia University under whose direction this study was undertaken and carried out. Thanks are due to Mr. Hiroshi Saito, Japanese Consul General in New York, who kindly put the library of the Consulate General at my disposal. Mr. Meiji Hara of New York, Commercial Secretary of the Japanese Embassy, has been good enough not only to permit me to use his office library, but has contributed helpful suggestions in regard to economic conditions in Japan and also helped me in getting material from the Japanese Government. Dr. Iwao Ayusawa of the International Labor Office, Geneva, Switzerland, has furnished me with valuable publications regarding labor legislation in Japan. I am very much indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Edward Thomas without whose constant encouragement, valuable suggestions and correction of English the completion of this study would hardly have been possible.

S. H.

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