

DISCUSSION

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Second Session took up the theme of "Changes in Work Life and Economic Ethos in Contemporary Societies." The three Panelists and the commentator discussed mainly on Quality of Working Life and its background, comparing Australia and Western nations with Japan. As elements of determinants of quality of working life, employee participation and autonomous working team were closed up. As a clever method to harmonize Quality Working Life with GNP growth, Japanese management system attracted attention and was discussed earnestly.

Prof. Rosenstein stated in his report, that the quality of working life (QWL) concept and its methods had caught the attention of many researchers, managers, trade unions, governments, and general publics. And he stressed the importance of QWL and reviewed the QWL movements in various countries especially in Europe and Japan.

He emphasized that QWL has recently been changing, because of rapid increase of the number of universities graduates and hence of diversification of their opinions.

So, in today's society, it is important to integrate and coordinate these diversified opinions. In Japanese society it is said that integration of opinions are made by consensus method. In Western European countries this integration of opinions were made through labor union and political process. And among these European methods, participation system is very important. In West Germany, there is a codetermination law, and all corporations must have co-determination-system. Large corporation above 2,000 employees must have half number of auditor's committee with representatives of employees. Of course, direct participation to management decision process have shown greater effect on job performance and also QWL than formal representative participation. The form of participation is an important factor to QWL.

Next, Prof. Mouer, from the point of view of QWL, compare Australian management with Japanese management.

Australians look Japan as fast economically growing country and expect that Japan would have No. 1 power in the world in the near future. But Japanese people complain that nominal GNP per person is the top level in the world, but the living standard of Japanese is not so high as GNP is. There is a wide gap between GNP and living standard in Japan.

In Australia, there is no gap between GNP and living standard. Australians work in order to enjoy leisure life, such as outdoor sports, barbecue at home garden and etc. On the other hand, Japanese work hard in order to earn GNP itself. In Australian societies, there are strong labor unions and social welfare systems. Australian can find his job easily. And hence he does not work hard as in Japan.

He expects that Japanese living style is anticipated in the near future to become Australian style. Surely Japanese society will be, in the future, more highly educated, more mobilized and more internationalized. More Japanese will live in foreign countries and some Japanese will spend their whole life in foreign countries in the future. Japanese domestic labor market also will be internationalized, and more foreign laborer will work in Japan.

Prof. Tsuda speaks at first that working attitude of Japanese young people now resembles to that of Australian people. Some Japanese young people now have second jobs and enjoy their life freely. In Aoyama or Roppongi in Tokyo, we can see easily such a young person. After the World War II, QWL of Japan has changed rapidly, according to the changes of the quality of labor.

Between 1945 and 1985, industrial workers increased 78%, and corporate employees increased 3.5 times. This statistics means that Japanese workers, at first, shift from agriculture to industries and secondly from blue color workers to white color employees. These shift have entirely changed quality of labor in Japan.

Japanese corporations, after the World War II, in the democratic atmosphere, tried to integrate efforts of young people to corporate goals, organizational growth and etc. In order to integrate employee's efforts, Japanese corporations introduced so-called Japanese management, such as life long employment system and seniority wage system.

Even now statistics shows that 60% and over employees are permanent employees, both in small and large sized business corporations. These permanent employees will become "company man" when he became around 40 years old. They strongly identified to their corporations, and devote their almost whole efforts to the corporations.

And these Japanese middle aged employees, perhaps they are mostly middle managers, feel that they are the middle class in Japanese society. The top management of Japanese corporation is selected among its employees. "All board" management, that is "managing by all the members of the firm" is the core idea of post-war Japanese management. And the feeling that all members of the corporation are the same middle class have built the idea and feeling of "all board management."

Japanese corporation's competitive strength fundamentally stems from this system.

Some scholars and executives insist that this so-called Japanese management system is now changing and, in the near future, will collapse and Japanese corporation will be American style corporation.

But Prof. Tsuda himself does not expect Japanese corporation to abandon so-called Japanese management system.

He expects that in order to cope with the technology changes and internationalization, Japanese management will still try to maintain life long employment system and strong employees' identification, for the time being.

But, at the same time, Prof. Tsuda pointed out that high income level and welfare benefits, increase of populations of aged people, and other changes of circumstances of Japan, will gradually make the thoughts and the behaviors of Japanese workers change in the long run.

The commentator Prof. Kishida asked the reporter Prof. Rosenstein three questions. The first question is; Grading up of QWL means humanizing of worker, and it is natural that the humanizing of worker lead to worker's autonomy. Are there any danger to fall into

disorder and inefficiency by this worker's autonomy? Next, he is anxious that, by his observation, introducing of team work concept often lead to inefficiency in Japan. Is it true that productivity and QWL are not inconsistent with each other? Third question was about the relation between participation and human engineering in West Germany.

Prof. Rosenstein replied that employee's participation to management is the key concept to reconcile productivity and QWL and human elements.

Prof. Kishida also asked Prof. Mouer about the relation between GNP level and working time. Will Japanese model be able to transfer to Australia? And also he doubted of multi-functional aspects of Japanese model.

Prof. Mouer answered to Prof. Kishida that he expected and hoped that Japanese management and worker's attitude toward work has possibility to coincide GNP with QWL. And Australians will be able to introduce Japanese management system in the near future, because Japanese management system is not a cultural phenomena but mainly a management system.

Prof. Kishida commented that in Japan also there is a high interest to theorize QWL problems. QWL accompanied with "humanizing labor." In Europe, QWL methods have spread over instead of Taylorism and Fordism. But Japanese management system retained the spirit and system of Fordism. The main issue is whether QWL is inconsistent with Fordism or not.

After Prof. Kishida's comments, several audiences asked the questions. For instance, Japanese management has a consensus method, but Australia has not. How to reconcile GNP with human where no consensus system exists. Rigorous discussions followed.