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Abe Isô and New Zealand as a Model for a "New" Japan

As industrialisation gathered momentum in Japan after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the already significant gap between the country's affluent few and its impoverished majority only widened. With many problems from the Meiji Restoration still unresolved, the rise of capitalism brought with it a new "labour problem". The appalling working conditions of urban workers became a concern for many intellectuals from Christian and humanitarian perspectives. Takano Fusatarô (1868-1904), Katayama Sen (1859-1933), and Abe Isô (1865-1949) were representative pioneers of the early labour movement and of Japanese socialism. Despite their humble backgrounds, they studied overseas and embraced the ideas of the international labour movement and of socialism, and, on returning to Japan, called for labour reform (Tsujino 1970, pp. 44-51).

This study focuses on Abe Isô, a professor at Tokyo Senmon Gakkô (the present Waseda University), who is regarded as a Christian socialist in Japan. He was born into the samurai class in its declining days and became concerned about poverty and social inequality as a child. He became a Christian in 1881 while studying at Doshisha (the present Doshisha University)[1] and then a socialist after reading *Looking backward,* a utopian novel by Edward Bellamy (1850-1898), while studying at Hartford Theological Seminary in the United States. Upon returning to Japan in 1895, he began proposing socialist

solutions to the "social problem", at a time when these ideas were still new to the Japanese.

Komatsu Ryûji maintains that for a short period of time during the formative stages of the labour and socialist movements in Japan, advocates of socialism, such as Abe and Katayama, were inspired by events in New Zealand.[2] Abe, particularly, was enthusiastic about New Zealand, where he believed socialist ideals were already being tested. Prior to Abe's references to New Zealand, intellectuals such as Shiga Shigetaka (1863-1927) had introduced the geographic characteristics of the country and pointed out their resemblance to those of Japan in *Nan'yô jiji* (Current affairs in the south seas)(1887). Abe, however, was the first to pay close attention to New Zealand's social policies; predating even Katayama's enthusiasm for the country (Komatsu 1996, pp. 103-105).

Komatsu also points out that while earlier studies of Abe refer to him as a socialist, educator, sports enthusiast and politician, and often touch upon his overseas trips to the West, they very rarely provide any details about his enthusiasm for New Zealand. This, he stresses, is a significant oversight, for the example of New Zealand was central to Abe's social thought and to its influence on the development of socialism in Japan (Komatsu 1996, pp. 103-105).

Furthermore, Cyril Powles claims that when Abe tried his own hand at writing about utopias, he characteristically chose

an actual country for a model (Powles 1978, p. 157). At a time when socialist ideas were still unfamiliar to the Japanese, with Katayama Sen describing them as thoughts in "terra incognita" (Katayama 1901, p. 14), Abe proposed them with the support of real-life models.

This paper examines Abe's beliefs that the New Zealand of the 1890s, a "country without strikes", had much to offer Japan. It first outlines the emergence of Japan's labour problems during the industrial revolution (1895-1905) and the consequent working conditions and implementation of *chiso kaisei* (the land tax revision) in 1873. It then examines Abe's analysis of Japan's social problems and his reasons for promoting socialist ideas as the best solutions for eliminating poverty which he believed was the cause of all social problems. Lastly, it examines the social policies in New Zealand that had convinced him of the merits of socialist ideas. It studies his ideas as expressed in *Shakai mondai kaishakuhô* (Solutions for the social problem)(1901), the *Rikugô zasshi* (The universe) and the *Heimin shimbun* (The commoners' newspaper) between the years 1895 and 1904. Although Abe had never visited New Zealand, he singled it out as a paragon, a country whose policies for the relief of social hardship provided an ideal model for Japan at the turn of the twentieth century.

1 Emergence of the Labour Problem and *Chiso kaisei* (the Land Tax Revision) in Japan

Victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the

subsequent Triple Intervention of 1895 further advanced the Meiji government's policy of *fukoku kyôhei* (enrich the country and strengthen the armed forces). The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 demonstrated to other countries that Japan was emerging as a power to be reckoned with on the world scene (Powles 1961, p. 91). Further consolidation of its defenses, however, required more foreign exchange, which could only be earned by exporting goods manufactured by "cheap" labour (Ôkôchi 1958, p. 4). The reparations obtained from China and the opening of the continental market triggered the industrial revolution in the ten years between 1895 and 1905 (Ôkôchi 1958, p. 5).[3]

In particular, two of the country's main industries, armaments and textiles, were experiencing rapid growth and produced commodities for export (Ôkôchi 1958, pp. 4-5). *Zaibatsu* (financial and industrial conglomerates which closely collaborated with the government and were allied to the military clique) were free to extend their private monopolies, by overwhelming smaller manufacturers.

"Excessively low wages and long hours" characterised working conditions during this period, when the workforce was predominantly female (Ôkôchi 1958, p. 2). For example, in 1890 the lowest wage for a Japanese female textile worker was one-tenth that of her English counterpart (Inoue 1984, p. 220). These low wages also had a detrimental impact on male workers, the "new urban labourers", most of whom endured wretched conditions and received wages insufficient to maintain basic

human dignity (Bamba and Howes 1978, p. 260).

Chiso kaisei (the land tax revision) of 1873 was largely responsible for the increasing numbers of female and urban labourers. *Chiso kaisei* transformed feudal dues into rent, without reducing pre-existing levies and also had an adverse effect on farmers (Ôkôchi 1958, p. 1). Private land came under the control of *kisei jinushi*, new "temporary" owners (Inoue 1984, p. 216). With the revision, farmers not only lost sources of conventional support, such as *iriaikai* (a communal support for farming/fishing in particular regions), but also had to pay tax regardless of whether or not their harvests were good or bad. Farmers became "independent" tenants to the landowners, most of whom, instead of reinvesting their profits in further agricultural production, speculated in stocks and bonds. As a result, some of the larger owners shifted their focus to areas of finance and industry (Inoue 1985, p. 51).

The land tax revision also allowed for the transfer of economically valuable fields and forests (the ownership of which was [conveniently] difficult to identify) to the state and/or the imperial household, thus making the emperor the country's largest landowner (Inoue 1984, p. 216). However, it is important to note that tenant farmers, who still comprised seventy percent of the productive population, competed with each other for small shares of land (Inoue 1984, p. 217). Such conditions forced farm girls to seek employment in cotton spinning, silk reeling and spinning and textile weaving, while the younger sons of farmers went to work in

factories. Farmers also did seasonal work in coal mines, on construction projects or in the northern fisheries (Ôkôchi 1958, p. 2). Thus, although the majority of the workforce officially remained "farmers", the industrial sector also benefited from their labour.

From the early 1890s disputes between landowners and tenant farmers increased (Inoue 1985, p. 16). From 1897 to 1904 labour disputes were occurring chiefly in the mining, transportation and textile industries, as well as in other larger-scale enterprises (Ôkôchi 1958, p. 23). During this period, political instability was the norm, with there being seven different cabinets and four dissolutions of the Diet between 1895 and 1901. Each "new" government failed to provide solutions to the increasing social problems. As a result, many people sank deeply into debt and redundant farmers continued to stream into the cities (Bamba and Howes 1978, p. 260). Such circumstances led many intellectuals, including Abe Isô, to embrace socialist ideas and argue for reform.

2 Abe and the emergence of labour movements and socialist ideas in Japan

It was "an epoch-making event in the annals of the labour movements in Japan" when Katayama, Takano and Shimada Saburô (1852-1923) formed the Rôdô kumiai kiseikai (Association for the promotion of labour unions) on 1 July 1897 (Abe 1908, p. 501). They encouraged industry workers to form unions and

discussed the "power" of the strike (Katayama 1918, p. 37, p. 51).

On 1 December 1897, the first trade union in Japan, the Tekkô kumiai (Ironworkers' union), was organized. It boasted over 1000 members and Katayama was one of its secretaries (Katayama 1918, p. 38). The Nittetsu kyôseikai (the Japanese railway workers reform association) emerged in 1898 following the success of a major strike (Katayama 1918, p. 38). This union published *Rôdô sekai* (Labour world), a monthly magazine, with Katayama as its editor and main contributer (Katayama 1918, p. 39). *Rôdô sekai* was the sole organ of labour propaganda for the working class and provided information about the new labor movement overseas (Katayama 1918, p. 48, p. 54).

Then, 3 November 1899, the Kappankô kumiai (Printers' union) was founded with approximately 2000 members. This organisation adopted different tactics to those of the iron and railway workers. Rather than perceiving the interests of capital and labour as being in conflict, it advocated basic reforms of the existing capitalist system (Katayama 1918, pp. 53-54). Hence it was regarded as "a model of conciliatory union" (Ôkôchi 1958, p. 26).

In parallel to the rise of labour movement, a systematic study of social problems took place. In 1890 intellectuals such as Katayama, Miyake Yujirô (1860-1945), Sakuma Teiichi (1848-1898), Tarui Tôkichi (1850-1922) and the Rev. Charles Elias Garst (1853-1898) organised the Shakai mondai kenkyûkai

(Social problem study association) (Abe 1909: 504). Kôtoku Shûsui (1871-1911), a disciple of Nakae Chômin (1847-1901) who was a principle theoretician of the *jiyû minken undô* (Liberal democratic movement), also became a member.

On 18 October 1898, a Christian intellectual, Murai Tomoyoshi (Chishi)(1861-1944), one of Abe's classmates at Doshisha, established the Shakai shugi kenkyûkai (Socialism study association), the first association for the study of socialism in Japan. Its inaugural meeting was held at the Tokyo headquarters of the American Unitarian Association (Powles 1961, p. 107). The members of the Association then met with Katayama, Abe, and Kôtoku who had become known to them through the Shakai mondai kenkyûkai. The leadership was eventually given to Abe, who had recently returned from abroad. The association's journal, *Rikugô zasshi,* published many articles regarding socialist thought including Abe's 'Land tenure in New Zealand', which will be discussed later in this article.[4]

Nonetheless, the socialist movement in Japan remained "anticipatory and preparatory" (Kublin 1950, p. 324). On 18 May 1901, Abe helped to found Japan's first social democratic party, the Shakai minshutô (Social democratic party), becoming its first chairman (Kimura 1964, p. 104). The other five founding members were Katayama, Kôtoku, Nishikawa Kôjirô (1876-1940), Kawakami Kiyoshi (1873-1949), and Kinoshita Naoe (1869-1937). All, except Kôtoku, were Christians. In collaboration with Kôtoku and Kinoshita, Abe wrote a draft of the Party's manifesto, which stated, "how we eliminate

inequality of the affluent and the poor is the most serious issue of the twentieth century" (Kimura 1964, p. 104).[5] With the founding of this party the Japanese labour movement, acquired an intellectual, socialist foundation (Ôkôchi 1958, p. 27).

It is important to note, however, that the early socialist movement was short-lived. The *Chian keisatsuhô* (Public peace preservation law) of 1900 made it unlawful to organise and maintain a trade union. In prohibiting industrial workers and tenant farmers from agitating against employers and landlords, the law sounded the "death-knell" of the labour movement (Katayama 1918, p. 58).[6] No sooner had the Social democratic party been established than it was disbanded by the government.[7] Between the years 1901-1903 socialists suffered constant harassment and persecution at the hands of a suspicious government which persisted in considering the movement both dangerous and revolutionary (Kublin 1950, p. 327). In spite of this, Abe and his fellow Social democratic party leaders returned to their educational and propaganda work with increased vigor and enthusiasm (Abe 1908, p. 510).

It was during this formative stage of the solialist labour movement that Abe strove to introduce the state-level policies of New Zealand which had so inspired him. Although he had never visited the country, he regarded New Zealand as a "utopia" where socialist experiments were being successfully implemented. Prior to examining his views of the social policies of New Zealand, the following is an analysis of the

social problem of poverty in Japan at that time, and Abe's reasons for promoting socialist ideas as a way of resolving it.

3 *Shakai mondai kaishakuhô* (Solutions for the Social Problem)

In *Shakai mondai kaishakuhô* (Solutions for social problem)(1901) Abe presented a systematic and concise analysis of the prevailing social hardships, and recommendations for alleviating them. The expression, "social problem", was still unfamiliar in Japan and the book was a revelation for his contemporaries,[8] becoming an essential textbook for those who studied economics in the late Meiji period (Tsujino 1970, p. 104). In it, Abe asserted that poverty, caused primarily by private monopolies, was at the root of all social problems. Wealthy men became rich only by monopolising the benefits of mass production; in effect, they were "thieves", stealing benefits from the workers who had actually produced them (Abe 1901, p. 382).

Abe highlighted three factors contributing to this. The first concerned the inability of small scale businesses to benefit from energy resources, such as steam and electricity, which should have been for public use and run by the government or corporations. The second related to the waste of resources, manpower and time resulting from strikes, wars and so forth, all of which were originally caused by "competition". The third factor was the unfair distribution of wealth (Abe 1901, p. 62). Of these three factors, Abe noted, unfair distribution of wealth was the most deeply rooted in society and, if not

eliminated, would continue to increase poverty even if the problems of energy inefficiency and waste were rectified. The resulting social and economic inequalities would eventually cause society to fragment.

Abe claimed that modern energy sources such as steam and electricity were profitable only if consumed on a large scale by machines and factories. The larger the scale of production, the cheaper energy became. Small factories could not match these economies of scale.[9] For example, a few timber merchants near where he lived employed several labourers to saw timber. However, if all the timber merchants in urban areas formed corporative groups, and purchased steam operated machines, their work would become as easy as "chopping *tôfu*". Moreover, production could be increased between sixty and seventy times. Japanese businessmen all knew the benefit that such machines could provide, but were still reluctant to venture into such undertakings because the concept of co-operation was unpalatable (Abe 1901, pp. 26-27). Consequently, production remained inefficient.

Abe considered strikes and wars the most serious among all the causes of waste (Abe 1901, p. 32). For example, labourers still needed some money while on strike, which could not be retrieved unless they were successful in their demands for wage increases. As for capitalists, even if lockouts were successful, they too would thereby suffer losses. But the biggest loser was society at large, since there was no way to recover the overall loss. Abe condemned the magnitude of

the energy wasted, with thousands of able-bodied men becoming idle as factories over a vast area came to a standstill. Comparative statistics from the Labour Bureau confirmed this claim:

(year)	(workers' loss)	(employers' loss)
1881	$3,372,578	$1,919,483
1884	$7,666,717	$3,393,073
1886	$13,973,472	$12,034,983

(Abe 1901, pp. 39-40).

The workers' loss, therefore, was greater throughout and one should not overlook the funds raised by other labour unions and charity organisations to aid the strikers. Also to be considered is the loss to society, particularly with regard to transport-related strikes (Abe 1901, pp. 40-41). As we will see later, Abe was aware of the disastrous Maritime Union strike which took place in Australasia in the 1890s, and which in turn inspired legislation for the arbitration of labour disputes in New Zealand. For this reason, unlike Katayama, Abe did not support strikes as a means of achieving workers' demands.

Abe claimed that the invention of machines had only increased the gap between the affluent and the poor. Although the wealth of society as a whole had improved, its unfair distribution had worsened the workers' situation. Productivity had risen several hundred times, but working hours and wages had not been improved; indeed, they had deteriorated. In effect,

workers had become slaves to the heavy machinery of huge factories. This was evident by the fact that, unlike in the days of home industry, workers' livelihoods were now directly dependent on the machines. Their work was also unrelenting. Most machines did not require skilled workers to operate them so the workers became little more than appendages of the machines. Finally, overproduction led to further unemployment and in turn economic tensions (Abe 1901, pp. 64-65).

Abe advocated socialism as a means of combating the current problem of poverty in conjunction with four other related means of relief: charity work, philanthropic education initiatives, co-operative work and state policies (Abe 1901, pp. 12-13). These can be explained in order of feasibility and effectiveness. Firstly, charity work provided the destitute with material relief such as money and clothing, food and housing. Secondly, philanthropic education initiatives provided a special spiritual and intellectual aid to both adults and children free of charge - the most representative example being the "university settlements" in Britain (Abe 1901, pp. 12-13). However, both charity and philanthropic education were privately organised. He noted that there was a limit to what they could provide in comparison with state policies (Abe 1901, pp. 12-13).

The third form of relief, co-operative work, consisted of initiatives offered by labour unions and trust associations (Abe 1901, Preface), for those who were employed [i.e., the

fortunate] and had some education (Abe 1901, pp. 12-13). Once again, however, these lacked state support.

Finally, state policies could provide permanent national reforms, such as compulsory public education. Bismark's Compulsory Insurance in Germany was a good example.[10] It was introduced as a national experiment in State Socialism. As we will see, Abe was convinced that some state policies were already working effectively in Switzerland and New Zealand. All four forms of relief had the common aim of maintaining and gradually improving the existing structure, rather than radicaly reforming it (Abe 1901, pp. 17-18).

Abe asserted that socialism, although the most difficult reform to implement, offered a superior form of relief because it aimed at eliminating the existing social order and establishing a new society. However, he warned that it would take as long as 500 years to reform the current structure thoroughly and therefore needed to be ventured in conjunction with the other four more immediate forms of relief. Each relief measure had both advantages and disadvantages and it was necessary to provide people with the most appropriate one for their needs just as it was necessary to provide the best cure for a specific illness (Abe 1901, pp. 17-18).

As an example, Abe criticised British India where, he argued, charity work proved the best relief for the forty million Indians suffering from the effects of severe famine in 1900. In this situation, philanthropic education initiatives and

co-operative works would not be effective. However, charity was only a short-term solution and would not guard against future famines. India's poor still needed to be educated and guided towards eventual self-sufficiency and social reform. Famines were caused by natural disasters and people were prone to starvation if they did not have rainfall in early summer and winter. Therefore, it was unwise for those who lived in such a region to be too dependent on agriculture. Despite developing both agricultural and manufacturing industries, Abe predicted it would take many years of preparation before India would be ready for such self-sufficiency. However, in time all four forms of relief could help realise a socialist state in India (Abe 1901, pp. 17-18). It is important to reiterate that while Abe believed it essential to cure the social ill of poverty by thoroughly reforming the existing order, he totally rejected destructive, revolutionary means of achieving socialist ends (Abe 1901, pp. 17-18). As we have seen in the manifesto of the Shakai minshutô, he believed in parliamentary socialism, a commitment which later alienated him from other socialists such as Katayama who supported labour strikes and Kôtoku who resorted to direct action and eventually came to advocate anarchism.

An urgent task for Abe was to persuade his contemporaries, of the merits of socialism. In 'Shakaishugi no unmei o kettei subeki mondai' (Decisive matters for the fate of socialism) (1903), he called for close attention to be given to current world affairs. According to Abe, the forming of financial trusts by the likes of John Rockefeller (1839-1937), Andrew

Carnegie (1835-1919), and J. P. Morgan (1837-1913) in the United States, the public monopolies of enterprises in Germany, Holland and the United Kingdom, and the significant increase in members of the Socialist Democratic Party in Germany were all signs of an international trend towards socialism (Abe 1903a, p. 25). He stressed that socialism was no longer a utopian dream – it was in transition from "being discussed" to "being ventured" (Abe 1903a, p. 25).

Abe was particularly impressed with developments in Switzerland. He pointed out that while all civilized nations in the West were deeply burdened with social problems, Switzerland had embarked on social reforms. In comparison with other countries, whose social systems were massive and complex, Switzerland enjoyed the benefits of a small landmass, which was divided into twelve autonomous states. Because each province was independent from the others, it was easy to experiment with new policies. Cyril Powles notes that "Abe recounted with approval the high priority placed on basic education, nationalisation of railroads, social security for labour, local autonomy and universal suffrage" (Powles 1978, p. 157). All of these reforms constituted the foundation for the realisation of a socialist order. Abe asserted that Japan should become the Switzerland of the East, rather than continue to emulate Britain. Powles maintains that "it was the quiet humanity of the Swiss that proved more desirable for Abe than the drive for empire of the British" (Powles 1978, 157 quoting Abe 1897, p. 5).

Nothing though, enthused Abe more than New Zealand's land and labour legislative reforms. He viewed New Zealand as "a paradise in the South Seas, while Switzerland was a utopia in Europe" (Abe 1901, pp. 343-344).

4 New Zealand as a "Utopian" Model

"For five years", said my New Zealand friend, "there has not been a strike or a lockout in New Zealand, that has not been held in a court-room". Thus, Henry D. Lloyd, in *A country without strikes* (1900), introduces New Zealand's pioneering Compulsory Arbitration Law (Lloyd 1900, pp. 3-4). After the New Zealand Company was established under the influence of Colonel Edward Wakefield (1796-1862) in 1839, and the Waitangi Treaty was signed in 1840 by both the tribal chiefs of the Maori, the aboriginals of New Zealand, and the British settlers, large-scale immigration to New Zealand commenced. This gave rise to many labour problems. In 1853 New Zealand became an autonomous colony. Despite this its economy remained unstable firstly because the overseas wool trade was still in its infancy and its prices were subject to wild fluctuations, and secondly because of the decline of gold sluicing. As a result, unemployment became a serious problem in the 1860s.

In an attempt to solve this problem, Julius Vogel (1835-1899), statesman and journalist, proposed that public enterprises provided assistance to immigrants. As early as 1869, government (national) life insurance was introduced. In 1873 the eight hour working day was enforced nation-wide and in 1877 free compulsory education was introduced. Shortly

thereafter the National Trust Company was formed (Lloyd 1900, p. 5). These reforms were without parallel in the world.[11] A newly improved method to freeze meat for export, particularly to Britain, marked a turning point in New Zealand's economy and heralded significant social and economic developments throughout the 1870s.[12]

Despite these reforms, persistent economic recession continued to blight the new economy and the 1880s turned out to be, as Keith Sinclair (1922-) described them, "hopeless depression days". State intervention, therefore, became inevitable (Komatsu 1982: 36). In the 1890s the labour movement became increasingly vigorous and social reforms were fully implemented under the Prime Ministership of Richard Seddon (1845-1906). These included the Factories Act of 1891, the Land Act of 1892, the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act (Compulsory Arbitration Law) of 1894, and the Old-Age Pensions Act of 1898, which guaranteed social security payments for the elderly (Komatsu 1982, p. 36). The Compulsory Arbitration Law was regarded as "revolutionary legislation" and the Pensions Act was the first of its kind, even among the countries of the British Commonwealth (Komatsu 1982, p. 40). Seddon's death in 1906 marked the end of a transition period throughout the 1890s in which significant labour and social reforms were achieved. It was during this period that Abe considered New Zealand a social and economic model for Japan.

During the years 1899-1904, Abe wrote a series of articles

about New Zealand in the *Rikugô zasshi* (1899) and the *Heimin shimbun* (1904-1905), praising it as "the most socialistic state to ever venture new experiments" (Abe 1904, p. 66):

> New Zealand has earned a reputation as the most socialistic country.[…] For example, railroads as well as telephone and telegraphic communication are being run efficiently by the government.[…] Tram, water, gas and electricity were municipalised and all of them have been run extremely well. […] Civil officials receive lifetime employment and their promotion depends on individual ability, but not on a transfer. When a government deals with many complicated projects, it is necessary for the officials involved to specialise and stay in the same position for a long time (Abe 1903b, p. 35/reprints 81-82). *

He was convinced that the country was on the threshold of becoming a socialist state, complete with public ownership of land, the maximisation of energy resources, and the government corporisation of communications and transport.

New Zealand's history played an important role in the rapid development of its social policies. The young colony did not possess traditional co-operative activities such as guilds, unions, political affiliations, and Christian charities. It was reasonable, therefore, for people to expect the government to initiate social activities, including those designed to

alleviate the suffering of the disadvantaged. Furthermore, since the beginning of the twentieth century, two political parties had been established and both needed to be responsive to their constituants' social needs in order to remain competitive and gain or maintain political power. Finally, the two spurs of an economy dependent on overseas trade, and the ongoing conflict between settlers and Maoris, highlighted the need for social security and welfare as well as government-stimulated production.

New Zealand's natural environment also contributed to its success. Although the country was not overly abundant in natural resources, its rich soil and mild climate were conducive to farming. In *Atarashiki kuni Nyûjîrando to Gôshû* (New countries - New Zealand and Australia) (1929), Namae Takayuki explains that one of the reasons New Zealand had reached its enviable social position was its successful farming industry. Ninety percent of the country's annual income was derived from dairy production and its exports amounted to 450 million *yen*. No other country, not even Australia, could earn so much wealth from a single primary industry (Namae 1929, p. 45).

Abe was also aware of New Zealand's farming successes and reported on this in 'Nyûjîrando no tochiseido' (The land system of New Zealand):

> According to the statistics of 1892, the production of wheat per one acre was 26 bushels, and four bushels

> for oats. The total farming land is 75 million acres, ten times more than that of the colonies in Australia. Four-fifths of the total land area (660 million acres) is available for agriculture and farming and the other fifth is forested which provides not only timber but beautiful scenery (Abe 1899, pp. 63-67).

Abe believed in the maximum benefit for all, which, he claimed, the land would produce if utilised efficiently. Namae maintains, this richness of basic resources was supplemented by progressive social policies, which resulted in a dramatic reduction in poverty (Namae 1929, p. 45).

Unlike in New Zealand, Inoue Kiyoshi notes that stock-farming had never taken hold in Japan because the cultivatable fields were owned either by the state or the imperial household and tenant farmers were not permitted to develop the land and did not possess enough capital to invest in stock (Inoue 1984, p. 216). In contrast, legislation in New Zealand encouraged land ownership and development, which Abe saw as "an excellent example of socialist principles":

> Private loans were so costly that land development began to stagnate. The government therefore reduced the loan interest rate in 1894. The rate is five percent per year, which can be reduced to four point five percent if repaid earlier. A term loan covers a half or up to two-thirds of the mortgage. The capitalists then claimed that the government loan is

> no longer necessary since their rate too has been lowered. However, the rate would never have been reduced to five percent if left to the initiative of capitalists (Abe 1903a, p. 35/reprint 82). *

Abe was convinced that state controlled ownership of land was a good start to avoiding capitalist land monopolies. Furthermore, in 'Nyûjîrando no tochiseido' Abe lauded the Land Act of 1858 (revised in 1892), which aimed to control colonisation of the land and speculators monopolising profits:

> The land is divided into three categories of urban, near urban and country. .. The government provides for the purchase of land by annual instalments. Having purchased land, the buyer has to reside on near urban land for four years and for six years on country land, a portion of which must be cultivated every year. .. The government can confiscate the land if these requirements are not met (Abe 1899, pp. 63-67).

The legislation for land possession and residency upon purchase not only dispelled speculators' ambitions but also eased urban expansion (Abe 1899b, pp. 63-67). Abe was convinced that the Japanese government should reform its land act, particularly with reference to the case of Hokkaido, according to the New Zealand model (Abe 1899, pp. 63-67). In stark contrast to this model, the Japanese government had sold the frontier land in Hokkaido to private companies at a

ridiculously cheap price (Kobata 1967, pp. 47-48).

Abe was impressed with not only the Land Act but also the Compulsory Arbitration Law which aimed at maintaining smooth labour-management relations and improving labour's conditions by means of cociliation rather than strikes and struggles (Komatsu 1982, p. 40). He was alarmed by Henry Lloyd's account of the disastrous events in Australia and New Zealand (Abe 1904, p. 66):

> Known as the Maritime Strike, it had spread from the shipping world, where it began, into a great circle of related industries. .. The New Zealand Minister of Labour set himself, in the following year, to find a remedy to prevent the recurrence of struggles not less terrible in the sum-total of losses than war itself. There had been no public conciliation or arbitration in New Zealand itself to supply any precedent. (Lloyd 1900, pp. 5-6).

The legislation resulting from such a destructive strike was vital for achieving future cooperation between employees and employers. Abe was convinced that strikes, which he believed were as destructive as war, had to be prevented at all costs and that a state arbitration law was the answer. "Since this law became effective", he stressed, "there have not been any strikes at all in New Zealand. The Japanese government that favours only capitalists should learn something from this law" (Abe 1903c, p. 51/reprint 122).[13] As we have seen, the Peace

Preservation Law in Japan did not allow any form of agitation against employers or landowners and it is interesting to note that the Factory Law, Japan's first labour legislation, did not become effective until as late as 1911, twenty years after New Zealand's Factories Act of 1891.

Having secured major reforms in land development and working conditions, the New Zealand government then passed its Old-Age Pensions Act in 1898. Abe commented on the quality of this legislation in "Nyûjîrando no hanashi" (About New Zealand):

> People would receive the pension as an honour for having worked honestly throughout one's life, regardless of means and status. Thus, it was decided that all residents who have lived in the country more than 25 years and are older than 65 years are entitled to receive a pension. If one possesses a criminal record, then he should be accommodated at a reformatory rather than being given a pension (Abe 1903b, p. 43/reprints 101).

He saw this legislation as a major step towards social equality.

Abe considered New Zealand's Pension Act to be much more progressive than similar acts passed in France, Belgium and Italy, and equivalent to that of Denmark, where people 60 years or older qualified as recipients. Even the United Kingdom had dispatched observers, including Sidney Webb (1859-1947),

Beatrice Webb (1858-1943), William Beveridge(1879-1963) and Janet Beveridge (?), to study New Zealand's policy (Komatsu 1982, ii). Abe stressed the difference in attitude between New Zealand and Japan, where newspapers competed with each other to report stories of the destitute who had committed suicide after having become too old to work, or even to thieve (Abe 1903b, p. 43/reprints 101).[14] While the welfare of people in Japan was neglected, New Zealand's world-clas social security system offered universal benefit for all.

Conclusion

In *Meiji no kakumeikatachi* (Meiji revolutionists), Tsujino Isao maintains that Abe vigorously advocated socialist ideals in order to realise a socialist state, a process which, however, might take up to five hundred years to complete (Tsujino 1970, pp. 110-111). Hyman Kublin avers that Abe was convinced that socialism could come to Japan only gradually and thus he continued to advocate Christian socialism and to strive unceasingly for social reform (Kublin 1950, p. 338). As we have seen, Abe lauded the new measures already successfully in place in Switzerland and New Zealand. In these "utopias", social and economic inequality had been reduced to a minimum, with theirs being of few extremely rich or extremely poor people. Compulsory education had resulted in there being almost no illiteracy. Particularly inspiring were New Zealand's national social policies, which he considered superior even to those of Switzerland.

Abe's quest for the democratic socialist model that he found

in New Zealand well reflects his concern about Japanese society and the rise of capitalism. In order to compete in world markets, the people's welfare was being sacrificed for state-wealth and military strength. In short, Japanese workers were paying the price for the national defence with their unremitting labour, in intolerable working conditions. With agitation against the interests of capital legally and ruthlessly suppressed, the adoption of New Zealand's successful social reforms, were, Abe believed, vital to Japan's future. At the same time New Zealand was also undergoing an economic transition from a domestic to an export driven agricultural economy. Nonetheless, the young nation had created a system that enabled employers and employees to work together within the existing capitalist order while minimising social and economic inequality. Although it was not a socialist state, Abe saw it as a world leader in a social reform and a far cry from Japan. A "country without strikes", and one genuinely considerate of its people and free of poverty, were attributes Abe hoped to see paralleled in Japan, even if it took generations to come – "utopia!".

Notes

Unless otherwise noted, all Japanese references were printed in Tokyo. Throughout this book, macrons are placed over long vowels of Japanese words, except for those including places and publishers, which are already known in their English spelling without them.

Notes

[1] Japan's first English school founded in 1875 by Niijima Jô (1843-1890), a fervent Christian.

[2] For other intellectuals who glorified New Zealand in the Meiji Era, see John Crump, *The origins of socialist thought in Japan* (New York: Croom Helm, 1983) pp. 104-106.

[3] Furthermore, the abolition of extraterritoriality and the restoration of a tariff autonomy in 1899 spurred the expansion of overseas trade (Powles 1961, p. 91).

[4] Others were 'Socialism of Ferdinand Lasalle' (by Katayama), 'Socialism of Karl Marx' (by Murai), and 'Socialism and on present political society' (by Kôtoku) (Powless 1961, p. 108).

[5]The eight objectives of the party expressed in the manifesto were; (1) universal brotherhood, (2) disarmament for the sake of universal peace, (3) abolishment of existing class-distinctions, (4) public ownership of land and capital, (5) public ownership of the means of transport, such as railways and ships, (6) equal distribution of wealth, (7) equal distribution of political rights, and (8) free education. Abe added twenty-eight other more immediately achievable objects (Abe 1909, 506).

[6] Ôkôchi points out that the Meiji government was concerned by the fact that it was led by socialists like Sen Katayama rather than by those who advocated cooperation between capital and labour. This led the government to clamp down on the new labour organisation (Ôkôchi 1958, p. 26).

[7] *Meiji shakai shugi to shakaishugi shiryô sôsho* (1973, pp. 425-426).

[8] It is a systematic compilation of his ideas and recommendations which he expressed in journals such as the *Rikugô zasshi*, the *Heimin shimbun* and so forth earlier in the 1880s and 1890s (Kimura 1964, pp. 11-12).

[9] Abe maintained that the competition for 'survival of the fittest' has reached the stage that calls for 'co-operation', as can be seen with enterprises forming trusts - in the West - a switch from the 'foolish competition' (1901, pp. 26-27).

[10] See 'the Shakai seisaku gakkai, which specifically advocated Bismarckian policies in Japan' (Crump 1983, pp. 70-72).

[11] Lloyd maintains that ever since Sir Julius Vogel, established in 1869, government backed life insurance, it has made a great success against the competition of the principal private companies of Australia, Europe and America. (Lloyd 1900, p. 5).

[12] For the connection between technological changes and developments within New Zealand's economy and society, see Crump (1983), pp. 104-105.

[13] Komatsu points out that Abe later translated *Labour Problem* (Rôdômondai zen), which referred to the Arbitration Law in detail.

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[14]Crump points out, 'he (Abe) was insensitive to the impact

of the policies he described on the very people he (as a socialist) should have been championing - the working class. This also raises questions about his internationalism' (13 August 2003, electronic communication).

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