

Don't dump wastes into the sea

In this extract of his memoirs, the pioneer of Japan's fishery co-operative movement exhorts fishermen to respect water bodies

As the first president of the newly-formed 'National Federation of Fishery Mutual Insurance Associations', I had to spend a large part of my time the following three years in order to realize the government's scheme. Finally, in February 1967, we succeeded in establishing this long awaited mutual insurance system.

I remain grateful to the fishermen of Hokkaido, who always took the initiative to strive to create a better system. They stood by me till the end, and together we have established the successful system under which the fisheries of Hokkaido are still managed today.

While I was president of the National Federation of Fishery Mutual Insurance Associations, I resumed the post of President of the National Federation of FCAs in 1967, and held the post until 1971. I had to spend much time dealing with the many problems related to administering these posts, and this came to be one of the most important periods in my career. I reported the matters that were discussed in Tokyo to the general assembly of the chairmen of the Hokkaido FCAs.

One of the most important matters was the establishment of the "Fundamental Law Concerning the Environment." We had many discussions about the establishment of this law, so much so that I have two boxes full of papers and tapes recording our proceedings.

From that material, I have selected a speech I gave at a "National Rally of Fishermen for the Prevention of Pollution" on 8 October, 1970 at the Tokyo Kyoritsu Auditorium while the law was still being debated in the Diet. In this speech, I detailed the historical significance of the fishermen's fight

against pollution. As we are today still faced with serious environmental problems, I hope you will realize the importance of supporting this fundamental struggle to preserve our natural resources in the oceans of the world.

"I'd like to welcome the more than 2000 ladies and gentlemen from fishery related organizations throughout the nation, who have gathered in Tokyo today. On behalf of the members of the host organizations, I sincerely thank you for taking part in this National Rally. Furthermore, I would like to express my appreciation to the many members of the Diet for taking time off from their busy schedules and for attending this rally to express their support for our aims.

As you may know, we have recently made many appeals to the public by organizing fishermen's rallies in each prefecture. As a result of our campaign, thousands of people throughout the nation have come to support our movement to prevent pollution. It seems as if we fishermen can truly lead and influence the public in this respect.

This rally has become a success because of the passion which the fishermen have for this cause. If we look back over the past few decades of high growth in the industries, it is not too much to say that the history of the fishing industry has been characterized by our struggle against water pollution.

Remote problems

Nevertheless, the general public has not listened to the cry of the fishermen; those outside the fishing industry reacted as if the problem of pollution was so remote that it did not concern them. Even our politicians, under the assumption that

they were promoting balanced development of the economy, gave priority to enterprises instead of preventing pollution. They trampled on our demands that natural resources be protected. We now know that their failure to make the proper decisions actually created obstacles to development and resulted in the current terrible conditions of our oceans.

This 'balanced development of the economy' has left us with seas in which fish can not live and rivers in which fish can not grow. Such a situation threatens not only those involved in the fishing industry, but also the well-being of all the citizens. In other words, the process of industrialization inevitably leads to the deplorable destruction of nature. That is a fact we must realize when we consider environmental pollution, and it is clear that the fishermen were correct to continuously appeal for the prevention of pollution.

A few moments ago, I stated that we fishermen are the leaders of the anti-pollution movement. We can make this claim because fishermen suffer most as a result of pollution, and it is the fishermen who have made continuous appeals to others to stop the damage. It is our sincere hope that all enterprises will strive to eliminate any negative influences their operations have on

nature. They must understand that they must give up some short-term profits and instead aim for fair and balanced development.

One fine example of the fishermen's struggle against pollution occurred in 1958 when fishermen who were engaged in aquaculture of nori in Chiba prefecture stood up in protest against the waste dumped into the Edo River by the Honshu Paper Company. Zengyoren supported their fight and tried to stir up public opinion by holding fishermen's rallies and petitioning the government to take strong measures against Honshu Paper. The central government then passed the 'Law for the Preservation of Water Quality,' which is still effective today.

This law, however, has not been truly effective, with the result that the expectations of the fishermen have been betrayed. Fishermen's livelihoods and lives have been continuously sacrificed in cases such as those involving mercury poisoning in Minamata and in the Agano River. These cases indicate a severe lack of respect for nature and for human life.

Frequent appeals

We fishermen gathered many times in Tokyo to protest the government's policy, and we made frequent appeals to the government and the Diet for the passing of the 'Fundamental Law to Protect the Environment'. Nevertheless, it was not

until the general public was faced with the serious problems of air pollution caused by traffic and by the damage caused to bays and coastal seas that the public became aware of the problem. In fact, the public actually became concerned only after the media started to present daily reports on the problem and the government decided to bring the aforementioned bill to the Diet for discussion.

When the government set up a committee to promote this law, we demanded that all enterprises be forced to review their pursuit of profit and their blind faith in science and technology, and that these enterprises be made to recognize their responsibility to society. We fishermen must unite and stand at the front of the anti-pollution movements, and we must protest all acts and operations that result in polluted rivers and seas.

Furthermore, we must also oppose the governments that have ignored these situations and allowed them to persist. We must demand that the government immediately establish fundamental measures for the prevention and eradication of environmental pollution.

I hereby state unequivocally that all our statesmen must take it upon themselves to resolve these serious problems, and that each and every politician should be courageous enough to take the lead in the struggle to create a harmonious nation with beautiful nature and a prosperous economy. I dare say that if they fail to take extreme measures, their policies will be useless.

I would also like to appeal to the general public. We must all stop throwing our waste into rivers and seas. These bodies of water are the reproduction centres which the fishermen have inherited from their forefathers. Each succeeding generation of fishermen has contributed to the health and well-being of the nation by supplying us with our foodstuffs. They can continue to do so only if we do not destroy their resources.

I would like to sincerely thank all the honourable members from the Diet who have helped us in our struggle to develop

our fishery industries. At the same time, I would like to appeal to you again to recognize the importance of the fishery industry. Once you realize how much our nation relies on fisheries, you will be able to transcend the ties to your political parties or party factions, and only then will you be able to make serious efforts to resolve the problem of environmental pollution.

In closing, to all the participants from the fishing communities throughout the nation, I would like to say, 'Let's work together to overcome the difficulties which we are sure to face.' In spite of my age, I promise to take the lead in this fight and to put all my energy into this movement. ♪

This tenth instalment is excerpted from the *Autobiography of Takatoshi Ando*, translated by Naoyuki Tao and James Colyn

Japan

