

Following the pace of the Times: An Era of Migrant Worker's Transformation ----under the Background of the Government's Transformation

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Abstract - In recent years, in order to become a government of laws and service, our government keeps transforming its function. People increasing pay attention to the subsequent social problems and contradictions, especially the problem of migrant workers. By analyzing the enlightenment which is given by the successful transformation of migrant worker in Japan, this paper discuss the measures our government have taken to promote the transformation of migrant worker under the background of the government's transformation.

Keywords - problem of migrant worker; transformation of the migrant worker; transformation of the government; public management

Our government began its self-revolutionary since 2003, and then it entered the period of transformation. During this period, the problem of the migrant worker was still been as the major problem which should be solved first. Taking some of the auxiliary safeguards is not enough to fundamentally solve the problem of migrant workers, it should also taking measures to let migrant workers move with times and transform with the government. Migrant workers will no longer be the strangers in the city and they will enjoy their new life as the truly members of the citizen.

1. The concept, existence and producing of migrant workers' problem

1.1. The concept

Migrant workers are mostly people with agricultural account who go to local township enterprises and prosperous towns as well as cities in search of work. Migrant worker is the outcome of China's unique

urban-rural dual system, and it is also a special social group appeared in a special historical period of China. State Council about solution agriculture laborer question certain opinions pointed out that the agricultural laborer is a new labor army which in our country reform and open policy and the industrialization, the cities advancement emerges. Their household register still in the countryside, mainly was engaged in the non-agricultural production industry, some egressed the work in the slack season, takes part both in industrial and agricultural labor, the fluidity was strong, some in the city employment, has become industrial worker's important constituent for a long time. The massive farmers enter a city the work or in the rural enterprise employment, has made the significant contribution to our country modernization.^①

In recent years, "new generation of migrants" as a new word came up, comparing with the old generation who treat survival as the sole pursuit, the new generation of migrants pay more attention to pursuit the quality of life. They have higher requirements for working environment

and benefits, they are no longer only satisfied with earn money like their fathers.

1.2. Background

Migrant worker has formed for a long time, and it experienced a long-term evolution from stopping doing farm work at home to doing other jobs outside home. The three "laborer tides", which gave birth to the first and second generation of migrant worker, occurred after China's reform and opening-up. China's reform was initially started at rural areas, and it solved the food problem during the four or five years since 1978. And the first difficulty of selling grain following, there were 70 million hectares of land began to produce cash crops in the rural adjustment of industrial structure, which stimulate the development of rural processing industry and the township enterprises. The first "laborer tide" appeared, thus the first generation of migrant workers had formed.

1.3. The existing problem---the problem of migrant workers

The problem of migrant workers, which refers to a series of problems come from the situation that although Chinese peasants engage in non-agricultural work in the city they cannot change their farmer identity and be accepted by the city, they are still on the edge of industry, urban-rural, and system. ^②

Comparing with the traditional migrant worker the new generation of migrant worker's life and living environment sharply ameliorated with the continuous improvement of the degree of our nation's industrialization, informatization, urbanization, marketization and internationalization since reform and opening up, and they now have higher and different requirement towards their work and life; But under the employment structure in the labor market where supply exceeds demand and the situation that urban-rural dual system is not completely broken, migrant workers are still faced with the problems of household registration, social security, wage arrears, the same labor but different earnings and other issues. Especially for the new generation of migrant workers, they are better-educated, which makes their expectations of city life including both physical and spiritual needs are far beyond their parents. A lot of the new generation of migrant workers is already working in the city for years, some of them even born in the city, so they hope they can live a life just as city dwellers, which including going to school, finding a job, getting married, and having children. But in the reality, there are still many people who feel it difficult for them to truly integrate into city life.

2. The analysis of the necessity for migrant workers to transform with the times

Now, migrant workers generally have a higher educational degree than before, and their career expectations and requirements of material and spiritual

enjoyments are at a high level, but their tolerance of working are low. Faced with these problems, in addition to make policy and reform the system, our nation should let migrant workers fundamentally transform. With the acceleration of China's social transformation, the transformation of the migrant workers is extremely urgent

2.1. Economic restructuring needs the migrant workers turn into "mechanic" from "coolie"

Economic restructuring will be a trend for the constructing modern China, no matter it comes fast or slow, now or in the future. When faced with the transformed economic structure, how migrant workers transform from traditional "coolies" to skilled industrial workers becomes a tough problem. Nowadays, money is only part of migrant workers' purpose to work outside home, they also want to buy house in the city and live like city dwellers. They no longer live a thrifty life and send money back home, not to mention go back home in order to building a house and marry a wife when they get enough money. When being discriminated, they will slam the door and leave. "I have the technology, so I do not worry about finding job, and I want to work in famous enterprises. I cannot stand the life in my last job, they provide food and accommodation but there were only steamed bread, pickles and boiled water at breakfast, and fried cabbage at lunch all the year around." said by a new generation migrant worker who holds a wait-and-see attitude in finding job. Many enterprises badly need migrant workers who have a certain technology. The economic no matter it is in the transformation or after the transformation all need migrant workers' transformation from "coolies" to the "mechanics", this is inevitable.

2.2. The essence of migrant workers' problem is the identity: the transform from "peasantry" to "townspeople"

Migrant workers are different from farmers, because they have already been away from the land and spend most of their time working and living in the city. They are also different from townspeople since they still have rural hukou. Due to the urban-rural dual system, migrant workers are in the edge between city and rural area. Household registration system do not only cause the difference between the title of "migrant worker" and "townspeople", but also the differences on issues, which attach to the system, such as public services, education, health care, welfare, etc.. This caused many new problems on migrant workers' life in the city, which is also the reason that migrant workers cannot integrate into city life.

In this regard, Han Jun, the minister of Rural Economy Research Department in Development Research Center of the State Council, said there are five major issues should be solved in order to promote the civilization of the migrant workers: First, the employment rate as the premise of migrant workers' integration into the city must increase; Second, let the

whole family of migrant worker to integrate into the city, that is solve issues about the education of the migrant worker's children; Third, the problem of inhabitancy; Fourth, improve the scale of social welfare system, which migrant workers can benefit from; Fifth, find a reasonable mechanism which can let the contracted land as well as homestead can be paid in transfer and quit after migrant workers settled down in the city. There is only one aim for both the reformation of the system or the preparation work about migrant worker's "civilization", that is the promotion on migrant worker's transformation from "peasantry" to "townspeople".

2.3. The acceleration of our nation's modernization and civilization need migrant worker's transformation from "traditional" to "modern"

As part of the development of urbanization, how to let migrant workers turn into townspeople and thus make their continual contribution to the harmonious development of city and its urbanization will be the problem to migrant workers after their civilization. This requires us to cultivate migrant workers' modern perceptions. Only if migrant workers have ideas of open-minded and civilization, China's urbanization and modernization can be regarded as a real success. Influenced by nature, policy, resource, and intelligence condition migrant workers cannot get rid of the rural thoughts, so they are still not familiar with modern social ideas about democracy, legality and freedom. In contrast, migrant workers still maintain Chinese farmers' concept about hometown, household, and fellow countryman. These traditional thoughts have advantages and disadvantages, so how to let them absorb the advanced thought and how to let them play a positive role are worth considering.

Therefore, in order to get along well with the development and successfully integrate into the city, migrant workers' thoughts should be transferred from "traditional" to "modern".

3. The enlightenment of migrant worker's successful transformation in Japan

3.1. Japanese migrant worker's successful transformation^③

Migrant worker cannot be found in the big cities of Japan. From 1955 to 1975, there are 725,000 migrant workers went into city and worked in non-agricultural department every year in Japan. Faced the same situation with today's China, at that time the migrant workers in Japan was also facing the problem of the unequal treatment of insurance and salary compare with the townspeople, but Japan only spend 20 years completing the transformation of migrant workers. What measures the Japanese government has taken to help migrant workers successful transformation? Following are the details:

First, Japanese has no household register, but a so-called "transcript" instead. When people want to go to other places for a long time, the only thing they need to do is moving their "transcript" out the local government, and then registering themselves into the local government where they want to live within 14 days.

Next, migrant workers can settle down under housing system of Japan. In Japan, there are public housing and housing corporations which can help the low- and middle-income families in their inhabitancy, some of them even built for receiving the migrant worker.

Third, Japan adopts a mandatory insurance system. Every migrant worker who works in city should join the insurance such as pension insurance, medical insurance, accident insurance, employment insurance, etc. This seems add more burden to enterprises, but it actually ensures enterprises' labor source, keeps them away from labor shortage.

Fourth, the enterprises was strictly required to provide their employees employment insurance by Japanese government, use this "lifetime employment system" to ensure that the migrant workers will not be in the trouble caused by unemployment. This largely avoid migrant workers losing their jobs after already losing their land, it also avoid the emergence of urban vagrants.

Fifth, Japan adopts nine-year free compulsory education. Children at their school-age must register themselves into the local education committee in three days after they moved in, and then go to school under the committee's arrangement. The problems of studying at a school on a temporary basis and sponsorship enrollment do not exist, not to mention the problem of returning home to take the college entrance examination.

3.2. The enlightenment to China

Although there are differences in social system and national conditions between our nation and Japan, which means we cannot copy the experience of Japan, we can still get a lot of enlightenment from it. Especially in this period, migrant workers still face with many challenges if they want to transfer along with our government. According to the successful cases in Japan, I think there are three major problems in migrant workers' transformation in China.

First, there is a clear distinction between rural registered permanent residence and urban registered permanent residence. Migrant workers need to apply for the temporary residence permit, birth control card and many other documents, which seriously hindered them from integrating into the city. At the same time, our nation's policy of low-rent housing is far from perfect, many migrant workers have no choice but living in the factory's dormitory, which is narrow and crowded, even the couples who work in a same enterprise have to live separately.

Second, our nation's high proportion of social security expenditure and the low benefits keep many enterprises and migrant workers from paying the insurance. And many of our enterprises' working environment is not that well, and some local governments often deliberately take sides in employers

in order to show their good relationship with enterprises, so some of the policy which protect the laborers are only formalities.

Third, the children of migrant workers, they can either choose to go to school alone at home or to study the schools for the children of migrant workers where teaching quality is low but the tuition is still high, and returned to hometown to take university or high school entrance examination.

4. The measures our government should take to improve the successful transformation of migrant workers

Based on China's social system, the following aspects should be taken to promote the transformation of migrant workers

4.1. First, begin with household registration system.

The essence of migrant workers' problem is the problem of "identity", abstractly saying is to firstly break the split structure of urban-rural dual system. To be specific, it should focus on solving migrant workers' social, medical, education and housing insurances issues by stages and in batches. Second, make sure they can enjoy the medical services and the opportunity for education (the current focus are the reeducation and life-skills training). Third, ensure them have house to live, it is the key point to make them eventually transferred into townspeople; Fourth, for migrant workers who born after 1980, the education of their young children should be mainly undertook by the local government's public education.

4.2. Give the new generation of migrant workers humanistic concern, and improve their political status

At the same time, sorts of migrant worker's organizations can be built, such as migrant workers' union. Now there is no legitimate organization who can help coordinate the work and life of the migrant workers, which led migrant workers have nowhere to ask for help when they were in trouble. If the government can set a legitimate organization, such as the migrant workers' unions, it will certainly reduce the number of unnecessary vicious behavior of the migrant workers. At the same time, the organization can set up a special psychological help group, which is similar to the employee assistance program and can give migrant workers humanistic care as well as psychological help.

4.3. The education and training of migrant workers should be strengthened, so that they will no longer be simple "coolies", but successfully transferred into "mechanics"^④

First, it is necessary to integrate resources, link up short-term training with academic education. The education of migrant worker always highlighting the short-term skills training, but in the long run we must consider the future reorientation of migrant worker and the requirements of the higher level of education. It is an effective way to link up short-term training with academic education, establish vocational education as well as credit system of adult education. When the training credits accumulated to a certain level, migrant workers should be encouraged to participate in vocational skill certification, in order to get the national vocational qualification certificate. Second, an effective education and training network should be established, so the modern means such as broadcast television and remote education can be fully used to teach basic knowledge of employment education to migrant workers

^① http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2006-03/27/content_237644.htm

^② <http://baike.baidu.com/view/919899.htm>

^③ Tong Huixin, The enlightenment of migrant worker's transformation in Japan, China Business Herald, 2010-3-23(006)

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