

Letter from Masuo Yasui to Taiitsuro Yasui and Renichi Fujimoto, 12 December 1907

English Translation

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As you know, the financial world in the U.S. is in the midst of the recent economic recession, and the entrepreneurial fever is disappearing for the time being. As a result, many large construction projects in Portland have been almost completely scrapped, and tens of thousands of workers are unemployed. More than 1,000 Japanese people are now hanging around at hotels. On top of that, the number of new Japanese immigrants to the U.S. has been increasing, making it almost hopelessly impossible for young people to find work. In addition, the railroads around our city are laying off many young people, and the wages have dropped from \$1.45 to \$1.10 and from \$1.30 to 95 cents.

The recession is so severe that the situation is almost unbearable, not only among whites but also among the Japanese. In spite of this recession, the Japanese hotel association has been outrageously raising the price of lodging, from 10 cents to 25 cents per night. Not only that but meals were also raised from 10 cents to 15 cents per meal, which not only reduced the workers' income but also doubled their consumption expenditure, leaving them in a very difficult situation. In fact, the accommodations for Japanese travelers in the downtown area are filled with guests, and as mentioned above, almost all of them cannot even eat normal meals. They spend the day with only a loaf of bread and water. The situation is unbearable.

Of course, there is not a lot of work available in the city at the moment. Even whites can only afford to eat and stay in their rooms and cannot afford to drink. Even white beggars are appearing. Hold-ups are happening on the streets every night, sometimes several times a night, sometimes at least once a night. Even murders have been committed unexpectedly. It is a very bleak situation.

According to one white man, there has not been a recession like this since the time of President Cleveland, and before that as far back as the Civil War. I am sure you can understand how these words are more than enough to understand the current situation. In times of economic recession like these, there are more and more thieves, but what is truly depressing is the shallow thinking and stupidity of those who put it into the act.



Translated portions of the original document are highlighted in red.

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