

Soliloquy of the President [housing] vol.167

There are less and less carpenters.

There were 940,000 carpenters in 1980 (according to the national survey), in 2005 there were 540,000. 400,000 carpenter less in 25 years. This is a 16,000 decrease in a year, therefore it should reduce to 160,000 until 2015. There are 380,000 carpenters now.

Not only carpenters but also craftsmen of construction sites are decreasing as well. The cost of construction grew 30% in Tokyo, The costs began to rise in Aichi prefecture, in Tokai region also. I want to build cheap and nice houses but I can't because of this craftsman shortage.

Suddenly indeed, but I was a craftsman. I was really working in construction sites as a craftsman 10 years, from 24 years age to 33 years. I could be a German teacher or be employed in a trading company after I graduated from college with excellent results (?) but I was interested in planning, design and construction of buildings. I became independent at the age of 24 but my father, who was a breadwinner of my family, died when I was 25 years old, I became a craftsman to support my 7 member family. It is a somehow rare course of combination. But I remember those fun 10 years.

I did not do craftsman work only. My tough boss taught me to prepare the tools, elaborate the technology, it was a mental work too. Increased work meant increase revenue also. The starting salary of a university graduate was 130,000 Yen back those days, I was a skillful craftsman and the best earned in the prefecture, my revenue was 1.3 million Yen a month. I became a one-man owner, president based on that money. I have 900 employees and 15 billion Yen turnover. (No. 1 in Mie prefecture) I liked and was fun this work.

Well, how to solve the craftsman shortage from now. Our company has orders for 480 houses in 2016. We got building order which consisted of 320 rooms for condominiums and senior housing units, a total of 800 homes. Those must be cheap and nice houses no excuse of craftsman shortage. The current number of 48 carpenters is not enough at all.

Well I have three ways here. ① Factory made “big beam” construction that I developed. The factory manufactured columns and beams with the “BB construction method” enable construction without carpenters even in rainy days or in typhoon. It is supreme. ② 16 carpenter trainees from the Philippines are now in our company, that will increase year by year. They are working well and serious. About 60 people take test and are interviewed in the Philippines and take 6-month training before coming to Japan. They are excellent craftsman. I appreciate that. ③ Now looking for “Yankees”. In a nutshell, young healthy people who don’t like to study. I am master and boss of craftsman. My favorites are a little bit problematic people. Teach strictly for two-three years in construction sites those kids so they learn the joy and fun of creating things. It is not necessary for them to graduate college but a high school. First about 30 people who dwell in a “shared house”, and learn in a “craftsman school”, teach them something like boxing and English too, we hope that they will be fine craftsman.

We should face over the problem about a shortage of craftsman to make a best solution in order to providing “cheap and good” homes for customers. The important thing is to work hard and joy so that our valued customers are pleased. Life will change if this is evident.