

Top interview: **Walk to be the Mayor of Kobe and the Future**
-- Talk on His Career as a Mayor and His Leadership

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Mayor of Kobe
Mr. Tatsuo Yada



Tatsuo Yada

April 1959: Became a local government official of the City of Kobe
March 1971: Graduated from the Faculty of Law, Kansai University
April 1990: Director of the Housing Bureau
(Managing director of Kobe City Housing Supply Corporation)
April 1992: Director of the Planning Department, Planning and Coordination Bureau
April 1994: Director General of Airport Project Head Office
April 1997: Director General of Public Health and Welfare Bureau
March 2000: Retired from Kobe City Government
May 2000: Executive Director of the City of Kobe Social Welfare Conference
April 2001: Vice Mayor of the City of Kobe
November 2001: Mayor of the City of Kobe

The interviewee of Top Interview in “Business Insight” this time is Mayor Tasuo Yada of the City of Kobe, who takes leadership for the city.

Japan itself and various companies in industries have been going through a period of drastic change. Administrative organizations are not exceptions, either. Not only structural reforms of administrative organizations in the capital, but also those in local areas have tried to find how to activate their organizations. In Kobe, there are still many traces of the damage caused by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, even though people on a business trip or sightseeing do not see them. All issues on restoration have not been solved yet. Besides, the times are against an unfavorable wind. These difficult times require a new leadership in reforms of an administrative organization.

With a new leader, of course everyone expects a different aspect of leadership on him from on his predecessor. In this documentary interview, we want to record our mayor’s firsthand opinions at his start as a mayor, so we invited him just after he took office as mayor. As promised at the interview, about one year later he wrote what has happened since then, his comments on them, and his new ideas. We added them to his initial interview. In this sense, this interview article is a little different from usual ones. Thus, the interview was done just after he took office as mayor and we added an additional note, his “up-to-date” voice. (The additional note was prepared with cooperation of Mr.

Hideaki Toyoshima of Administrative and Financial Bureau, Administrative Management Department, the City of Kobe).

Instead of a retrospective view of his starting period as the mayor, we think this is a rare chance to record his firsthand comments at that time and his later comments on the present situations and on the future. This time our interviewers are the following two: Kanai on the mayor's career and leadership, and Syouji on his municipal government. They went to the City Hall for this interview.

Please enjoy the interview of Mayor Yada at the start of his office and its additional note for the up-to-date.

Editor: The world does not change well unless someone takes leadership. While leadership of a country or a city is a big theme, everyone encounters a situation requiring to taking his own leadership. In this sense, leadership is everyone's interest. There is of course a difference between a new government official's view of Kobe and a mayor-to-be's. In the first half of this interview we asked Mayor Yada about his vision and leadership, and in the later half we asked him about content of his municipal government, including city development projects. Two editors interviewing Mayor Yada are both from Kobe, raised in and living in Kobe.

His First Experience that Made Him Quantum Leap -- Fund Raising for the Universiade

Editor: The Peter Principle says, "People are promoted to their level of incompetence." This is an idea of Laurence Peter ■1 using his concept of incompetent level. In a case of a college faculty, when a person who did fine as a lecturer is promoted to an assistant professor and starts making a mess on his desk and delaying returning a phone call, he is at the level of incompetence according to the Peter Principle. This indicates that he should not be promoted any more. In spite of that, some of those like him will be promoted to professor, dean, and president. At a company, someone who already reached his level of incompetence is going to be promoted to manager, general manager, executive, vice president and finally president.

So far we have collected three or four "Experiences that made me quantum leap at work" ■2 from each of excellent top managers of companies. Different from a president of a company, a mayor is elected through an election. It is a rare opportunity to ask a head of municipal government, that is, a mayor, about his experiences that made him quantum leap at work, getting to the top. Therefore, first I would like to ask you about your experiences. Please tell us three or four of your impressive experiences at work that are useful for bigger leadership in the future.

Mr. Yada: What I can remember first is the job related to the Universiade in Kobe in 1985. For its preparation I managed its finance and raised funds. It was just after I was promoted to manager. For four years, from '82 to '85, I was at this job that had made me a complete "private company worker." Since I worked with those people without any relationships with the city, I had to think like a private company worker. When I had done with this job, several companies asked me, "Will you really go back to the local government?" Four companies tried to head hunt me, saying, "Would you join my company?" (laugh).

I declined those offers saying, “This job was given to me by Mayor Tatsuo Miyazaki. ■3 This is not a private matter. Of course I am going back.” While I was at this job, I learned how to accomplish a job and how to make a connection with people. This was a very meaningful learning experience for me.

Editor: I see. Did you do the job alone with no leaders over you?

Mr. Yada: No. It was an organizing committee so that of course I had leaders over me. The chairman of the organizing committee was Hironoshin Huruhashi ■5 of JASA■4. The Universiade was a national event and the committee was its upper organization. You asked me who was over me at work. I worked under the mayor and the chairman of the organizing committee. Since the city did not have many officials, I had in fact all control of actual work, such as fund raising and financial implementation. It was a good experience for me.

Editor: Is that an experience that you were greatly entrusted with this job?

Mr. Yada: If not entrusted, I could not do anything. After all, we did not have enough officials. While sometimes I reported my achievement to someone over me, I was entrusted with actual strategies. Besides, we had time limits. Deadlines were publicly decided. The in-house finance was budgeted and expenses were needed to be less than the budgeted limit. 4,000 to 5,000 outsiders related to the Universiade were not satisfied with the limited expenses. However, it had to be compromised somehow in order to open the event. Thinking like this, I was very strict with the finances.

Editor: It sounds like a hard job. This job was a project that had a clear start and clear end.

■1 “*The Peter Principle*,” authored by Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull, (1969). Published by William Morrow and Company in New York. (“*The Peter Principle -- Recommendation of <Creative> Incompetence*,” Translated by Yuji Tanaka, (1970). Published by Diamond, Inc.)

■2 “*Quantum leap at Work - Learned from “Quantum leap experiences at Work” by Kansai Economic Federation*,” authored by Toshihiro Kanai, (2002). Kobunsha Paperback Pocket Edition.

■3 The Mayor before last. His period in office is from 1969 to 1989. As the thirteenth mayor, he introduced a new idea, “city management,” in local autonomy and called Kobe “His lover.” The fourteenth mayor is Yukitoshi Sasayama (1989 - 2001). The fifteenth is Mayor Yada (2001 -).

■4 The abbreviation of Japan Amateur Sports Association

■5 He was born in 1928. Surprisingly, he broke the world record of 1500 m freestyle at the National Championships in the United States in 1949. He established 33 world records in his life. American mass media called him with a nickname “Flying Fish of Fujiyama.” The chairman of Japan Swimming Federation (1985 - 2003.) The chairman of Japan Olympic Committee (1990 - 1999.)

As the chairman of Japan Universiade Committee, he was appointed as the secretary-general of Kobe meet organizing committee for the Universiade. He contributed much to invite other countries, deal with athletic groups, and raise a fund. Well-known Mr. Huruhashi was indispensable especially for negotiations with International University Sports Federation.

His Second Experience that Made Him Quantum Leap-- The Period of Welfare Work

Editor: What is your next experience that had an impact on you?

Mr. Yada: After the Universiade, turning 180 degrees, I worked in the field of welfare. The period of welfare work was four years since 1986. While the field of welfare was new to me, I sympathized with it very much. During this period, I had pondered about the importance of welfare issues, and wondered, "What is welfare?" I was a manager of a department then. I often insist that the essence of welfare issues is issues on the handicapped and human rights. I was clearly convinced of it at that time.

Editor: What relationships did you have with your superiors during this period of welfare work? Leadership can not be easily learned at training. The following questions are often asked related to leadership: what job were you assigned? Who was your supervisor? How hard was the job, felt like being in a hell? ■6 For the Universiade, you worked under the mayor and the chairman. Who was your superior in this job in the field of welfare? Did you work directly under the mayor?

Mr. Yada: I had the general manager and the chief of Health and Welfare Bureau over me. I was greatly influenced by the chief of Health and Welfare Bureau about how to view humans.

■6 Each of these three questions are summarized as assignment (assignment), relationship (relationship) and hardship (hardship). These are explained in detail in a following book which has a reputation of good research on leadership development. "*Handbook of Leadership Development,*" authored by Cynthia D. McCauley, Russ S. Moxley and Ellen Van Velsor, (1998). Jossey Bass Business and Management Series. In San Francisco, CA.

Taking Full Responsibility as Managing Director of Kobe City Housing Supply Corporation

Editor: What experiences are impressive for you, besides the two you already mentioned?

Mr. Yada: Shortly after the job in the welfare field, I was appointed as general manager. The first job as a general manager was a job as a managing director of Kobe City Housing Supply Corporation. I spent four years working for the Universiade, the next four years working for welfare, and, then, two years working at this housing supply corporation. The collapse of overheated stock and real estate markets was just about to happen in Japan. There were so many people looking for a house. To respond properly to their needs was a problem there. When I judged what kind of needs we must meet from the supplying side, I took full responsibility with any mistakes on my judgments. I profoundly felt management responsibility.

About 90 regular employees worked at this housing supply corporation. I was sent from the local government and would move on to another position soon, after a certain number of years. However, I had to establish a system providing enough money for those regular employees who stay there for a long time. At that time when the collapse of overheated real estate markets was getting close, the total amount of pooled profit at the supply corporation reached about ¥ 15 billion. I assumed that we had to use the money someday.

When Mr. Miyazaki was a mayor, he often used a Japanese phrase “Agecho, sancho.” ■7 When a situation is good, we should pool the excess as a fund. Later when tax revenues decrease, we can use the excess funds we have pooled in the past. He called this idea “Agecho, sancho.” I have thought that these kinds of ideas were very important.

Editor: What experiences are impressive for you at the Kobe City Housing Supply Corporation?

Mr. Yada: The most impressive was that I spent a long time discussing with local residents who were against the plan of a skyscraper apartment at Seishin New Town. The discussion took about a year. In spite of its length, I was strongly convinced that mutual trust and sincerity were very important in those discussions.

After that job, I was appointed as the general manager of the Planning Department of the City of Kobe. At that time, I joined in a planning team for a master plan of the city development.

Next, for three years I had worked as the general manager of Kobe Airport Planning Office. The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake happened during these years. Kobe Airport was mentioned in “Sixth Airport Development” ■8 and a national government budget was assigned for it. Just after this budget assignment, the earthquake occurred. I had to work on many national procedures for the airport budget after the earthquake. The restoration after its damage was the biggest goal for me. I had worked on both the restoration and the national procedures for the airport budget. In fact, after the earthquake, I had worked on both the restoration and the procedures for the airport budget for two years. Later, I was appointed as the Chief of Health and Welfare Bureau.

Editor: Was this the first time you were appointed as the chief of a bureau?

Mr. Yada: No, the first time I was appointed as the chief of a bureau was when I was the general manager of Kobe Airport Planning Office.

Editor: Is that right? Your jobs were not limited at the inside of the local government.

Yada: If I can say this about my jobs, I had always given a new theme at work.

■7 Agecho is the abbreviation of withdrawal excess in Japanese. Withdrawal excess means excess received from the private sector. In the Receipts and Payments of Treasury Funds with the Private Sector, the amount a government pays to the private sector is less than the amount a government receives from the private sector. It reduces the amount of currency in the private sector and causes monetary stringency. Sancho is the abbreviation of scattering excess in Japanese. Scattering excess means excess paid to the private sector. In the Receipts and Payments of Treasury Funds with the Private Sector, the amount a government pays to the private sector is more than the amount a government receives from the private sector. It increases the amount of currency in the private sector and causes monetary relaxation.

■8 This is the abbreviation of the Sixth Five-Year Airport Development Program which was planned by a former Minister of Transport. The planning period is from fiscal year 1991 to fiscal year 1995. In this program, Kobe Airport was named as “a probable project.”

Activate the Private Sector as the Chief of Health and Welfare Bureau

Mr. Yada: When I was the Chief of Health and Welfare Bureau, nursing care insurance system was at its preparation stage. At that time, nursing care insurance system depended on a local administration. People used to think that a local government had to manage home care system, nursing homes, and so on. I fundamentally denied this kind of idea. I thought that this was bad and would cause a disaster. Certainly the city must do planning and inform our residents, as well as hire staff for the planning and information service. However, to all nursing care business in Japan, I sent a message insisting that the private sector must do all nursing care services. Then, about 60 companies gathered in Kobe for me. This was just two years before nursing care insurance started.

At that gathering, when I sought participants' comments, they said that they appreciated receiving information in this way. While it was still uncertain how the nursing care insurance would turn out, many explanatory meetings were held to provide proper information to them. Year after year I have believed more firmly that this kind of meeting for proper information is very useful as a guiding principle for Japanese people.

In addition to home care service, it is essential to ensure the sufficient supply of nursing homes responding to the advance of aging in Japanese society. We knew that the aging in Japanese society would advance more and more. Ahead of the aging situation, we started to develop the foundation of nursing homes in Kobe. I asked hospital managers to list conditions for opening a nursing home. Also, I asked them to convert beds at hospital wards. ■9 What the city directly guided the private section to do is to construct special nursing homes ■10 which are managed by the private sector.

Besides, there are other jobs related to nursing care insurance, such as home helpers and rehabilitation service. I wanted the private sector to provide these as well. Until then, the city had provided some of these services. I promoted the private sector to take all business in this field. Since the City of Kobe decided to no longer provide any home helper services, we had to negotiate with 65 home helpers for more than a year, having them employed in the private sector. Since home help business originally started as volunteer work, the city had some share of its business. We were going to open all the business to the private sector. Then, I said, "This is not right. The city should give up all its share of the business in two years." Thus, we have reached a goal that all the home help business should be provided by the private sector. Although, in the present, some affiliated organizations of the city still remain in the field of this business, they do not infringe on the private market. I recognize that it has been running smoothly.

■9 This is conversion of a bed applied to medical insurance into a bed applied to nursing care insurance. In April 2004, the introduction of nursing care insurance requires that a bed is specified by a prefecture as one for nursing care insurance, in order for a long term care hospital to provide services insured by the nursing care insurance. Then, the City of Kobe asked local hospitals to "convert of beds for medical insurance to ones for nursing care insurance, so that the residents in the city can receive services insured by the nursing care insurance."

■10 This means "Special nursing homes for the aged."

Two Ways to Provide Public Service

Editor: There are two ways for an administration to provide public service involving the private sector. One is that while the administration provides a palm of a hand, that is, a business field already designed by local and national governments to the private sector, the private sector can freely run the business. The other is that although the private sector can design a business field as well as running it, an unacceptable design would be corrected by the administration. What do you think about these two ways?

Mr. Yada: I did two things at the start of all nursing care business by the private sector. First, in order to prevent free competition aiming at more shares of the business, the city was divided into 77 areas. Each area in the city recruited a home nursing care support center who were allowed to apply for multiple areas. At that point we estimated that there were about 260,000 aged who were older than 65 years old living in the city. We divided the city into 77 districts according to population and the size of an area. Otherwise, it might be too big for the nursing care business to be successful. Three recruiting meetings were held so that we could see how eager the private sector was in the nursing care business. Seeing how many home nursing care support centers applied, I judged that the private sector could freely run the nursing care business alone.

Next, it is related to the quality of nursing care service. In order for citizens to receive the same quality of nursing care service, we explained home nursing care support centers what evaluations they should go through. This prevents them from running an irresponsible business.

I have believed that consumer administration ■11 has been very advanced in the City of Kobe. Kobe Consumer Association ■12 cooperated with us, saying “Let the private sector run all nursing care business.” At first we had some troubles. However, like Kobe Consumer Association, NPOs worked for home nursing care arousing a great interest in the society. This seemed to be a secondary effect. I think that it has been going well.

Editor: Did some people worry when Mr. Yada, the then chief of the bureau, announced highly depending on the private sector to run the home nursing care business?

Mr. Yada: May be some people worried. On the other hand, entire members of the bureau cooperated immediately in this direction. Of course I talked about my project to the top of the city. Therefore, at the meeting with 60 private companies nationwide, the head and the number 2 (the mayor and the deputy mayor) came as well as other related people, so that they could see business managers of the private sector.

Editor: A chief of a bureau sounds like a head of an organization. However, you had the mayor and the deputy mayor over yourself. I understand that you were entrusted by them with this project. Am I right?

Mr. Yada: Rather than being entrusted, first of all I was sure that this was a big project. There are not many projects for which the total budget reaches about ¥ 50 billion. I thought that this system would fail if it did not guarantee proper services to our citizens without exception. The city had to respond to each district’s different situation of preparing a facility or securing home nursing staff. In order to respond to a different situation in each district, we made a system to check and evaluate nursing care homes at each district divided by certain size.

■11 Ahead of the nation, in 1974, the City of Kobe enacted “Municipal ordinance to protect residents’ lives in Kobe,” aiming to firmly establish consumer rights. The City of Kobe has put total consumer administrative policies into effect with the cooperation of each level of citizens and business people.

■12 In 1967, this was founded aiming to establish consumer rights, increase consumer benefits, and improve consumer life, by spreading knowledge on products and providing fair information among consumers. It has successfully dealt with various consumer issues.

At Last Took Office as Mayor

Editor: You told us about your career, mainly about impressive job experiences. After these experiences, you finally took office as mayor. Did you think to become the number one at last? In the business world, the difference between the number one and number two is said to be bigger than the one between a new face and the number two. When you become a CEO (chief executive officer), you had to make big decisions alone with no one over you. When someone asked Chairman Idei of Sony Corporation, “Did you think to become a president of Sony?” Chairman Idei answered, “No, I did not. However, I had told everyone what I would like to do as a president of Sony.” What do you think about your taking office as mayor?

Mr. Yada: I had never dreamed of this. I once retired and had helped a welfare group a little. I was going to make welfare one of my lifeworks.

Just 11 months after I was appointed as a senior managing director of the City of Kobe Social Welfare Conference, the then mayor told me to come back to the city as the deputy mayor. I was told to focus on urgent tasks as the deputy mayor. Among those urgent tasks, some sounded familiar to me, since I had dealt with them before. And I knew how hard the then mayor had worked in the middle of restoration after the earthquake. Because of these reasons, I accepted the offer. However, I had never dreamed of running in an election just 4 months after it. I was surprised.

Pressure at a Hard Job Raises a Person

Editor: A person’s growth does not stop after his childhood and continues even after he is grown up. Going through hard experiences that mature yourself, your character and outlook on life grow wider and bigger. Retrospectively, what was your case like? There are no schools to teach how to be a mayor. You have learned through administrative experiences. What do you think about the chain of your job experiences?

Mr. Yada: Since I raised funds for the Universiade, I have always thought that my job often brought tremendous pressure upon me. At the fund raising for the Universiade, I was told to raise the total amount of about ¥ 7.5 billion without using any taxes. I counted the total amount of money collected in an account by myself all the time. I settled the accounts after a little more than ¥ 7.5 billion was raised. I felt that the interest in the event grew more with the ripple effect of suppliers and sponsors. Although no one supervised me, I probably accomplished this job because of the pressure of this job.

I told to my wife, "If I failed at this job, I should leave the local government." Thus I needed to make up my mind to finish this job.

I had just turned 40 then. Since I did not become a local government official willingly, I thought in reverse that I could do anything as my job. For a long time I had held this kind of strange impertinent thought, different from ordinary people. If I failed, I should leave the city any time without excuses. In order to avoid it, I had to do my best at work. I always held these contradictory thoughts in my mind. My primary goal had been to accomplish a job. This is the same for me even now.

Editor: When you raise a young generation, you have to give them a job of good quality and let them finish it under resolution or pressure. Without going through these experiences feeling resolution or pressure, they cannot be useful working in a responsible position.

Mr. Yada: Yes, they need these experiences to go through. We give such a job to a young person on trial. It is necessary for them to challenge something once. It is very important to raise a person. And teamwork is important, too. We work as a team.

Vital Point of Leadership -- Trust and Mutual Challenge

Editor: Do you have some vital points of leadership, important words on leadership that you always keep in mind when you lead people?

Mr. Yada: It is important to trust people. I do not mean to blindly trust anyone. Also, you and I challenge each other and, in the mutual challenge, we both had better learn something.

Editor: A word "challenge" is often used as your word in various articles.

Mr. Yada: The resource of an organization is "a person," and it is also "a person" who makes a change possible. In a sense, it is not too much to say that a person's willingness is everything. Difficult situations that we face cannot be solved without challenge spirit of each staff member. I always tell the staff of the city, "Do not fear a failure."

Great Leaders for Mayor Yada -- Konosuke Matsushita and Toyohiko Kagawa

Editor: When Americans are asked, "Who is a great leader for you?" most of them list Abraham Lincoln and Reverend Martin L. King, Jr. as their great leaders. When Japanese salaried workers are asked the same question, their great leaders vary from Nobunaga Oda to Kakuei Tanaka. Who is your copybook of leadership?

Mr. Yada: I have two people in my mind. I respect Konosuke Matsushita as an entrepreneur or a founder of an organization. Also, I respect Toyohiko Kagawa ■13, because of his welfare movements, personality and way of life.

Konosuke Matsushita sought opinion of many people. That is very wonderful.

Editor: I agree with you. What a top person tends to forget is to learn from subordinates, to seek the wisdom of the many. These are very important. What about Mr. Kagawa?

Mr. Yada: He sacrificed himself very much, way beyond my expectations.

Editor: Among those who you have actually seen, who is your copybook or model?

Mr. Yada: I really respect Mayor Miyazaki and Mayor Sasayama who had actually worked with us.

■13 Toyohiko Kagawa (1888 - 1960). The forerunner of Co-op Kobe, a consumer cooperative association was founded by him in Kobe. Christian thinker and activist.

Leadership in Setting an Agenda and Making a Network

-- Framework Common to Municipal Government and Business Management?

Editor: We are members of a group on business administration, the Research Institute of Advanced Management. Although usually we study cases of corporations, some cases are exceptional. In fact, John Kotter of Harvard Business School who is famous for his leadership theory wrote "Mayors in Action" ■14 as his first work.

Even though a mayor does not always tell everything publicly, an excellent mayor has a list of action plans along with his campaign pledges. In his mind he has a longer-term view than his publicized view as an official plan. At the same time he has a to-do list for a day in his mind as well, such as to ask this to someone in an elevator in city hall today. Kotter called this mayor's behavior "Setting an agenda." You can not have a mind picture or an agenda suddenly sitting on a chair. The keys of leadership, according to Kotter, are a mayor's agenda that is gradually created in his mind while meeting many people, and a realization of his agenda by making a network. This kind of a mayor's behavior is very similar to one of a general manager of a major corporation. ■15

A mayor meets many people in the process of his creating an agenda. As his agenda gets more practical, he meets more people and tells them about the agenda in his mind. Therefore, the number of those who would be surprised at his agenda gets less and less. He does not start working on the agenda for the first three or four months. While he meets many people, the agenda takes shape in his mind and a network of people for it is built as well. Through this network of people, his agenda is realized at its executing stage.

The contents of his agenda are of course important. Besides, in the process of its creation it is important to meet many people to build a network involving them for the agenda. Knowing Kotter's theory, it is very interesting to see that you value "Talk on the Street." The scholar of business administration, John Kotter, originally studied mayors and now insists that the essence of leadership is setting an agenda and making a network. I would like to get Mayor Yada's comment on this. What do you think about this idea that first of all you must see people to draw a big picture in your mind? It is obviously not good if you can not draw a picture after seeing them. You often use a phrase "sow seeds" and began "Talk on the Street" in a shopping district, especially Kasuga no Michi close to where you were born. How is "Talk on the Street" going? Its purpose is to hear firsthand voices of citizens, isn't it?

Mr. Yada: Several situations in the city made me begin “Talk on the Street.” First, I wanted to make sure if my actual feeling on the restoration in the city were real. Seeing people in a local town, I might be able to really make sure something. Next, the city has issues on local economy and unemployment. Also, I wanted to know real problems at each local area. We have some activities, like welfare related activities, based on a local area. These activities are related to welfare, environment, education, culture, developmental planning, children and disaster measures, etc.

I want to know what expectations our citizens have for us in these fields. How much are they, for example the aged, satisfied with us? Although many think that we receive lots of complaints about our municipal government, I want to know the reality. Therefore, I am going to continue “Talk on the Street.”

In “Talk on the Street,” some people offer cooperation as a team with us. It is very encouraging. Someone at a small local organization says, “Our organization plans to do something in our own way. It would be helpful if the city supported us a little.” This is very important. I continue “Talk on the Street” in this point of view.

I do not do “Talk on the Street,” just as a scheduled routine, going around three or four places a day. Rather, I like to talk with local people to some degree. This is not always easy.

In addition, I have the Policy Recommendation Meeting. Members of this meeting are supposed to tell me their thoughts in any field useful for real improvement of Kobe in the twenty first century. Currently this meeting has 97 members.

Editor: It is very difficult to hear firsthand opinions of citizens. And furthermore, it is even more difficult to make an actual agenda based on their opinions. Mr. Konosuke Matsushita said that we should make something consumers would be delighted in rather than something consumers would ask for. When consumers are replaced with citizens, Mr. Matsushita’s words sound more difficult to realize. It is very difficult to make an actual agenda based on their voices and to absorb unvoiced voices. To seek the wisdom of the many is one of the main objectives for Kobe in the future. What do you think about Kobe in the future?

■14 “*Mayors in Action: Five Approaches to Urban Governance*,” authored by John P. Kotter, (1974). Wiley Series in Urban Research. Published by Wiley in New York.

■15 “*The General Managers*,” authored by John P. Kotter, (1982). Published by Free Press in New York. (“*The General Managers - Their Way of Thinking and behavior*” authored by John P. Kotter, (1990). Translated by Toshihoro Kanei, Tadao Kagono, Kotaro Tani and Tomiaki Utagawa. Published by Diamond, Inc.)

Future Plan on Total Completion of the Restoration

Mr. Yada: The most important thing in the relationship with our citizens is total completion of the restoration after the earthquake. For these two years we have tried to complete unfinished parts of the restoration plan for five years just after the earthquake. First of all we have to finish this restoration. The next issue for the city is its tight finance due to the restoration. Everyone should cooperate with one another to solve this issue. At the same time, the aging advance more and more

in our society and we also have the declining birthrate along with issues on children. I must know how much the city can enrich the welfare for our citizens. The local economy and employment in Kobe must be improved little by little. It is hard for me to hear a young person say, "I like Kobe. But I cannot find a job here." It is really hard.

These issues are all related and mutually influenced. When I am dealing with one of the issues, some people say that Kobe is getting worse because of our measures and, on the other hand, others support us to implement our measures against the issues. Thus we need to encourage one another.

In summary, I think that the goal for this decade in Kobe is to establish a system for every citizen to cooperate to make the city of Kobe a safe, peaceful and vivid place to live. Besides, as longer-term issues, we have issues on a new industrial field and change of the direction of existing industries. The industry-university and private - public cooperation is important in order to deal with these issues.

In order to strengthen the cooperation between the city and companies related to NIRO ■16 that I have been involved as a beginning of something, I have been seeking better ideas, discussing with a president of a university or people of the business world. The important thing in the present is to see many people anyway and to find a mutual goal or reach an agreement with each other. Since just finding an idea does not bear actual fruit, we practically work together as a team as well.

■16 NIRO (The New Industry Research Organization). The New Industry Research Organization. This was established in 1997 by Hyogo Prefecture, the City of Kobe and local private companies. The industry-university-government cooperation of NIRO makes research and development of new technology and products possible, as well as technological support for small businesses. NIRO contributes to create a new industry, develop existing industries and industrial restoration at stricken areas by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.

To Those Who Say That the Old Port of Kobe Does Not Come Back Any More

Editor: There has been a deep harbor in Kobe. It used to be called "Ohwada Harbor." Since Kobe has been an international city with a port, we have had a firm industrial foundation. For example, in the United States, Chicago has been called a conventional city. Originally, Chicago has been a distributional hub in surrounding grain-producing region. Besides, there has been industrial accumulation, such as the headquarters of McDonald's, Kemper Insurance Company, and Sears Brand, LLC. in the distribution industry. Chicago often holds a convention hosted by these companies. I want Kobe to be called a city with fashion or conventions, based on firm industrial foundations. The Kobe Medical Industry Development Project is in an interesting direction for Kobe.

Mr. Yada: In fact it is very rare for a company to last for a hundred years. Thinking in this way, things have always changed. Each of us can put up an antenna to observe changes in a different way from one another. Scopes of these antennas overlap to supplement one another. Thus observing changes with many people, we should not only discuss on different opinions, but also be led by someone who is capable of making a decision without delay. If we can not catch up with changes, we are left behind. When we follow changes from behind, it does not work. The timing is necessary not to get an accidental inspiration, but to make a decision regarding those changes. We will fail without timing.

Surely, the Port of Kobe was influenced by the damage of the earthquake and distributional changes due to the damage. However, I have said, "If you gave up, the port would not come to life again." We must do now what we can do now. And we must set a time limit to deal with an issue. We always need a goal and a time limit to achieve the goal. A goal needs to have a time limit. If failing even with a goal and a time limit, you may review at a proper time. However, once a goal is set, everyone must work together toward the goal.

In the case of the Port of Kobe, we need to deal with the service quality of related business, other administrative organizations and changes of customs more swiftly. Until now the City of Kobe had slowly sent a mission for port sales, cooperating with the private sector. However, this will not work in the future.

Editor: In the past, the city invited people from the private sector and made a team for port sales.

Mr. Yada: Yes, it did. We need to move faster. This is not a case to do slow jobs. We need to be like a salesperson running toward a goal. Therefore, I asked capable retired people who used to work actively in the private sector to come work for the port as their second jobs. They are in fact current members of the sales team at Kobe Port Terminal Corporation. They have worked hard to make sales for the port before anybody else. In their sales work, they have noticed some issues and conditions. Then the city works to solve them.

Want to Have Long-Term Goals as Well as Quick Actions

Editor: While citizens support reforms to catch up with swift changes in the present, they also want to see the city's long term goals at the same time. These are their contradictory demands.

For example, probably citizens silently think that the Port of Kobe would never be like it used to be in the past. In fact, compared to the times when the port had a high status in the City of Kobe, ports' status are declined nationwide in Japan. What will happen on the Port of Kobe in the future? What are your long-term goals?

Mr. Yada: First, related to what you told me now, the City of Kobe is going to set a goal of total amount of physical distribution at the port. For instance, we set a goal for 2005, 2007 or 2010, increasing the amount each year. In 2001, in fact, the total amount of physical distribution at the port was 2.01 million TEU ■17. Then, we want to increase it to 2.5 million TEU in 2005, and furthermore, 3 million TEU in 2007. Like these, we need to set a concrete number as a goal to work toward. If we failed to reach a goal in 2005, we could check the port then.

In the case of employment, our goal is that twenty thousand people would be employed in the city. Once in this March, I received a report on an actual employment survey. We also set annual goals for a number of employees for the first, second and third year. Without a goal each year, we can not check the improvement of the employment situation in Kobe. Four years later, we can not say, "Sorry. We failed to reach an overall goal." Like the case of employment, we want to improve physical distribution at the Port of Kobe in this way.

In addition to these, I want to drive the distribution business out of this area that we can see from this City Hall. This area should be redeveloped as a waterfront zone. In fact this area around the City Hall is a highly attractive area with much amusement. I want to change this area to be a place like a waterfront park for people to gather and enjoy.

■17 TEU abbreviates Twenty feet Equivalent Unit. It means a total number of shipping containers which length is 20 feet.

Numbering Sands and Drinking Oceans Dry at the Same Time

Editor: There is a famous phrase in “Richard II” by Shakespeare; “Alas, poor Duke! The task he undertakes is numbering sands and drinking oceans dry.” It is a real challenge to listen to each voice, to pay attention to details which is essential in a case, and at the same time to draw an extremely huge picture in one’s mind.

As we see each grain of sand, we also want to see such a big vision of the future far away that it is like to drink oceans dry. We want to see an exciting big vision of Kobe in the future. May Kobe be a more and more comfortable place to live for its citizens.

Mr. Yada: Let’s work together to make the vision into a reality.

Editor: Yes, let’s do it. Please keep in touch with us. Thank you.

[Up-To-Date -- Additional Note to the Interview]

The starting point is citizens’ voices.

I have still kept hosting “Talk on the Street” which was started just after I took office as mayor. I go to a shopping district or a welfare center which is a place of actual living and activities of our citizens, and there I listen to their opinions. The starting point of municipal government is to directly listen to the citizens’ opinions. Otherwise, I might do my job merely under “the wrong impression.”

Currently, I go around each ward in the City of Kobe. Fortunately, I am sometimes invited by local people saying, “Please come to our ward.” I would like to continue “Talk on the Street” as long as my being a mayor. Local citizens say, “We have to improve our town by ourselves. Otherwise nothing can be done. Thinking in this way, we have tried to improve our town, instead of depending on the administration.” I feel their powerful energy to improve their own town by themselves.

At the Policy Recommendation Meeting, I also listen to opinions of citizens of various backgrounds. They all participate in this meeting because “They like Kobe very much.” They say, “Because of our love for Kobe, we improve our town by ourselves.” Listening to their opinions, I strongly believe that a society in the twenty first century is a “society which local areas are independent and active.”

Beautiful town, Kobe

This February, I proposed “Beautiful Kobe that citizens can be proud of” as a vision of Kobe in the twenty first century, and encouraged them to work in close cooperation.

Last year, I visited San Diego in the United States for an enterprise promotion seminar for the medical industry. Then, one of my impressions on San Diego was “the town’s beauty.” Citizens and corporations have worked together, sharing tasks with one another, in order to make a beautiful town. The climate is mild, and it is comfortable to live there. There is an excellent university that is a center of technological development. San Diego is also a port town and a tourist site, attracting people.

I think that Kobe is an exotic fashionable town surrounded by mountains, an ocean and natural green. However, recently one thing is always in my mind. The view of our town has been damaged by various things like trash, graffiti, and advertising flags. We can not be selfish. We need to encourage people grow, in their hearts, a sense of civic responsibility which is necessarily for members of a society.

As a lead to grow a sense of civic responsibility in their hearts, I started projects under the slogan “Beautiful Town Kobe.” As a knowledge-creating society in the twenty first century, comfort, easiness, hospitality and beauty of a town is indispensable for Kobe where is a field for people to come and grow from all over the world. In order to develop Kobe as a medical industry city and tourist sightseeing city, I really hope to create “Beautiful Kobe” together with all the citizens.

Mail messages for the local government staffs

“Happy customers are made by happy employees,” is a phrase often heard in a private company. It is absolutely same in an administration. In order to provide the citizens good service, first of all the local government staff need to be willing to do so. “Happy citizens are made by willing officials.”

To keep your willingness in your mind, the important thing is to always “challenge” a new thing with a goal and a time limit set. Not just to say it but to seriously believe it makes a good future possible. How can I communicate this thought to the officials of the City of Kobe? In reverse, how can I share their wisdom and worries with me and support them? As a result of many thoughts, I started mail messages thinking, “It is best to write down my thought and deliver it myself.” It was just one year after my taking office as mayor.

In the first issue of the mail message, I wrote, “I want to join in your discussion. Please reply to me with your opinion.” I did not know how many responses I would get at that point. However, I received more than ten replies on that day. I read all of the replies from our government staff members. One of them said, “When all civil officials who love Kobe work together, this ship Kobe-Marunouchi will certainly endure wild waves in a powerful storm and revive in the near future.” Touching their enthusiasm, honestly I was very glad believing that Kobe can still do much more. And I want to make an active town expanding this circle of discussions.

My mission

Finally, I would like to talk about my mission. The other day, at a meeting with chiefs of bureau I discussed missions of each division of the city. What is the ultimate mission of a local government? I think that it is “to protect citizens’ lives.”

It is important to think in citizens’ point of view, not based on a theory of a government. And it is important to constantly check if we are seriously willing to achieve a goal and if our work is adjusted to changes of the times. I have often talked on “management quality,” since the quality of management starts with exhaustive discussions on our own missions based on citizens’ viewpoint. We can protect citizens’ lives only when we steadily work from this viewpoint.

I myself want to keep challenging a new thing in order to accomplish my mission.

[From Editors]

The business administration studies not only companies, but also various organizations such as hospitals, schools, foundations, NPOs, consumer cooperatives, etc. Administrative organizations have been studied in the public administration. Basic literature on both academic fields greatly overlaps. For example, a student on the public administration learns the principles of scientific management by F.W. Taylor, the human relations movement by F.J. Roethlisberger and E. Mayo, decision making study by H.A. Simon as well. As we mentioned in the interview, John Kotter of Harvard University, the most influential scholar in the organizational theory of business administration, originally studied mayors’ leadership. The basic idea on making an agenda (outline, script, vision) and building a network came from studies on mayors, not from studies on business managers that were done later.

Keeping this in mind, we asked Mayor Yada about his career, leadership, thoughts on the municipal government. It is meaningful to print his thoughts at this timing just after he took office as mayor. It is also meaningful to add the additional note on his later thoughts.