"Public Anger," Power, and the Rule of Japanese Elites□□鉢呂辞任の疑問: 「エリート政治家にはヨソ者の存在が許せない」

Philip Brasor

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The Japanese translation of this article by Sakai Yasuyuki, and an introduction by Norimatsu Satoko, follows.

Hachiro Yoshio 's stint as the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry in the new Noda Yoshihiko administration was not the briefest cabinet assignment on record, but it was certainly one of the most controversial. News outlets reported that it was "public outrage" over two remarks he made which forced Hachiro to quit. In the absence of evidence, we have to take their word for it.



Phased out: Hachiro Yoshiro, former minister for Economy, Trade and Industry. KYODO PHOTO

One of the remarks, that the area around the crippled Fukushima nuclear reactor was a "town of death," supposedly offended the people who had been evacuated from the region, but the media have been describing the place in similar terms for months now. The Japanese Twittersphere is still buzzing that it wasn't the public that was offended by Hachiro's remark but rather Tokyo Electric

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Power Company, which is still working out a payment system for residents harmed by the accident. Hachiro stated at his news conference when he assumed the METI position that "in principle" he would work to phase out nuclear energy.

Hachiro's other transgression, a joke about contaminating reporters with radiation after returning from Fukushima, is more problematic. It's obvious that at the time he allegedly made the joke Hachiro thought what he said was off-the-record, but as journalist Masaru Sato commented on Fuji TV, the ground rules for what's on- and what's offrecord in Japan are "vague," and since every media outlet printed or broadcasted a different quote it's not clear exactly what Hachiro said or who first decided to report it. During his resignation news conference he apologized without actually owning up to the joke. One unidentified reporter interrupted Hachiro in a derisive tone and was shouted down by another journalist. A Kyodo News editor pointed out on TBS that news conferences are for asking questions, not for "prosecuting public figures." The joke, if he made it, was certainly careless, but given Hachiro's gregarious personality it likely sprang from a misplaced sense of camaraderie rather than from any cynical impulse. What he didn't understand is that the press, no matter how friendly they might seem, is waiting for such a moment since gaffes are so fun to report.



Resignation

TV personality Daniel Kahl tweeted that Hachiro's remarks were "insensitive" and that he "must be a scion of some political dynasty." In fact, Hachiro is one of the few people in the Diet who did not have political connections, family or otherwise. He worked in a Hokkaido agricultural cooperative and later stood for election under the banner of the Social Democratic Party. During his political career he has always professed an affinity for farmers that was more sincere than that of most party politicians, who tend to look upon the agricultural sector as a constituency ripe for exploitation. When reproducing the "town of death" quote, the mainstream press neglected to report the next sentence Hachiro uttered: "We have to change this situation."

Japan is run by elites — powerful bureaucrats, corporate leaders, people with pedigrees — and

while many other countries operate under similar sorts of regimes, Japan's ruling class is empty of ideology, unless you consider money the manifestation of a particular philosophy.

Take the Matsushita Institute of Government and Management, a private educational establishment set up in 1979 by the late Matsushita Konosuke, founder of the Panasonic group, as a kind of finishing school for future Japanese leaders. Prime Minister Noda is a graduate, as are 37 other Diet members, 27 from the Democratic Party of Japan and 10 from the Liberal Democratic Party. The media are busy analyzing the institute in order to isolate the philosophy of the new administration, which isn't very difficult. Matsushita was a fiscal conservative and supporter of a strong alliance with the United States, but his main purpose for the institute was to give bright young people without any connections a means of getting into politics.

The institute has helped unconnected political aspirants gain office at both the national and local levels, and in the process has itself become a bastion of elitism. The school receives about 200 applications a year and accepts a half dozen. One of the truisms about elites is that they only identify with other elites. According to a Myojo University professor interviewed in Tokyo Shimbun, national assembly persons, whether they got in through a family connection or Matsushita's institute, are instilled with the "Nagatacho logic," which says that all political activity is based on who you agree with. That fact of political life explains the obsession within the DPJ over which members support kingpin Ichiro Ozawa. Matsushita Institute grads may learn how to cultivate their leadership qualities by cleaning toilets and perfecting their calligraphy, but in the end it all comes down to how to accumulate influence, which means money.

It's no secret that bureaucrats control the central government, but it goes further. Thirtyone of the current 47 prefectural governors used to be employed in various federal ministries, and many were elected with the

help of local private sector concerns they worked with while they were bureaucrats. The governors of Saga and Hokkaido are former METI officials whose families have ties to energy companies that go way back. Both are now working to get nuclear reactors in their prefectures back online.

Policy is decided from on high, but the elitism of the average politician is only useful in internecine matters: Who's on top this month? It's why Kan Naoto was so poisonously vilified, not only by the opposition, but also by lawmakers in his own party. He was no more inept than any other prime minister of the last three decades, but he was the first — and probably the last — prime minister who entered politics through a non-government organization. Kan started out as a community organizer. That just doesn't happen, and the elites, which include the people controlling the media, couldn't stand it, so what chance did Hachiro Yoshio have?

This week's Media Mix (link (http://philipbrasor.com)) is about Hachiro Yoshio's resignation as Minister of Trade, Economy and Industry, though it's mainly about the enduring dominance of "elites" in all aspects of Japanese life. As I implied in the column, elites more or less run the world, so there's no particular reason to think they wouldn't run Japan. If there's a difference, and I admit it's a relatively slim one, it's that the Japanese media take this situation so much for granted that they basically accept it as the natural order; so while there isn't any concrete proof that Hachiro's ouster was engineered by some cabal headquartered deep within a bunker under Hibiya Park, the fact that so many media advanced the idea that his gaffes caused "public outrage" (a term used by almost every English language publication that covered the matter) proves at the very least that they thought he deserved to lose his job. As I told my editor, who was reluctant to run the line "we'll have to take their word for it," I could find nothing in the available media, in

either English or Japanese, that offered proof of this "public outrage." NHK went out on the street and interviewed a few passers-by who expressed dismay at Hachiro's remarks, but is that representative of the "public" and does it qualify as "outrage"? In fact, if we use the NHK interviews as a standard, there were just as many comments in letters-to-editor columns agreeing with the "town of death" remark. The only disparaging comments I could find were to the effect that since Hachiro was representing METI, which had a hand in the nuclear accident that created the town of death situation, there was something disingenuous about him saying it, even if he wasn't in the ministry when the disaster took place. This sentiment goes back to the theory I posited earlier this year in this column about that BBC program joking about the gentleman who suffered both the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings. The victims and their relatives own the narrative to that tragedy, so nobody else gets to comment on it, much less joke about it. Hachiro, as a representative of the government that made it possible for the Fukushima No. 1 reactor accident to happen, had no right to identify with the victims, so the town of death comment was inappropriate. But that's not "outrage" to me.

As for Hachiro's remark about passing radiation onto reporters, it was a pretty adolescent joke, and thus smacked of desperation. For people to find proof in that joke of Hachiro's air of superiority betrays a lack of understanding of human nature. It doesn't excuse him of being childish and needy, but resignation? All he has to do is apologize for acting like a dumb kid and that should be it, but the idea that he has to leave over such a faux pas was obviously pushed by more than public sentiment. Though I didn't mention it in the column, rumor has it that Fuji TV first reported the joke, and thus every other outlet, not wanting to be seen as having missed the boat, had to report it as well. But the race to put that quote out there was so fast and furious it was difficult to tell who did it first. That's why all the quotes were unique: every reporter who was there heard something different, meaning they weren't taking notes when he said it. Did one or more media outlet have it in for Hachiro? I'd say it's a definite possibility, but in any case, as distasteful as many people found the joke, it didn't warrant resignation. All it proves is that the media and those who really make a difference don't care who is doing what in the government. It's all an elaborate show, because nothing gets done.

Philip Brasor is a Japan Times columnist. He blogs at philipbrasor.com

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鉢呂辞任の疑問: 「エリート政治家にはョソ者の存在が許せない」(ジャパンタイムズ記事翻訳□Japanese Translation of Japan Times Article "Political elite can't stand outsiders"

また、鉢呂氏は、その前にも「原発はゼロになるこの9月18日ジャパン・タイムズのフィリップレイザー氏の記事で、官僚エリート主義松下ではる政界において、京も地盤も名民である。では、なったないになったでは初めて首相になったで首相になったで首相になったでは、である。では、である。ではないか。

上記ジャパンタイムズの記事 (http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fd20110 918pb.html)を、酒井泰幸氏の翻訳で紹介します[@PeacePhilosophy

エリート政治家にはヨソ者の存在が許せない

フィリップ・ブレイザー

野田新内閣での鉢呂吉雄経済産業大臣の在任期間は閣僚在任期間の最短記録というわけではなかったが、最も物議を醸したことは確かだった。報道メディアは、鉢呂大臣の2つの発言に対する「民衆の怒り」が、彼を辞任に追い込んだのだと報じた。証拠はないので、報道をそのまま受け入れるしかないが。

(http://l.bp.blogspot.com/-AKyP50Am3Jk/Tn-_0RnbeBl/AAAAAAASdQ/Nmxit5Anvzg/s1600/japantimeshachiropoliticalelite.jpg) (写真キャプション) 退場する鉢呂吉雄、元経済産業大臣(共同)

発言の一つは、事故を起こした福島原発の周辺 地域は「死の町」だったというもので、その地 域から避難していた人々の感 情を逆なでしたとされるが、メディアは何ヶ月も前からこの地域を同じょうな言い方で表現してきた。日本のツイッター社会で今も飛び交っているのは、鉢呂大臣の発言で感情を損なったのは民衆ではなる、むしろ東京電力で、彼らは事故によって損害を受けた住民への賠償制度を現在策定作業中なのだ。鉢呂大臣は経産 大臣就任を受けての記者会見で、原子力は「原則的に」廃止する方針であると表明した。

鉢呂大臣のもう一つの失言は、福島から帰った 後で、放射能を記者らに付けたと冗談を言った というものだったが、こちらの方がより大きな 問題となった。鉢 呂大臣が冗談を言ったとされ る時、言ったことは オフレコだと彼が思ったの は明らかだが、ジャーナリストの佐藤優がフジ テレビで語ったところによれば、日本で何がオ フレコで何がそうでないかという原則は 「あい まい」で、各メディアが印刷したり放送したり した鉢呂大臣の言葉はみな異なっていたので、 鉢呂大臣が具体的に何と言ったのか、あるいは 誰が最初にそ れを報道すると決めたのかは明ら かではない。辞任記者会見での謝罪の中で、彼 はその冗談については実際にあったことだと認 めなかった。一人の記者が鉢呂大 臣の発言に嘲 笑的な調子で割り込んだが、別のジャーナリス トに怒鳴りつけられた。共同通信の編集者はПП の番組で、記者会見は質問のための場であって、 「公的人物を告発する」ための場ではないと指 摘した。問題の冗談は、もし鉢呂大臣が本当に 言ったのなら、実に不注意なものだったが、鉢 呂大臣の社交的な性 格を考えれば、皮肉な衝動 などではなく、むしろ場違いな友情の感覚から 出たのではなかったか。彼が理解していなかっ たことは、記者たちは、いかに好意的に 見えよ うとも、このような瞬間を待ち望んでいるとい うことなのである。失言の報道ほど面白いもの はないのだから。

Ⅲタレントのダニエル・カール氏はツイッターで鉢呂大臣の発言は「無神経」で彼は「どこかの政治王朝の子孫に違いない」とつぶやいた。だが実際には、 鉢呂大臣は国会では珍しく政治的コネや血縁など持たない人物である。彼は北海道の農協で働き、その後日本社会党の推薦で選挙に立候補した。彼の政治経歴を 通して、後は常に農民との密接な関係を公言しておりてる、は他の政党政治家が農家を自分に投票してもれる選挙民としか見ないのに比べ、誠意のこも、たものであった。「死のまち」発言を報じた時、

主要報道メディアは鉢呂大臣がその次に語った 一文を無視した。「私達はこの状況を変えなければならない。」

日本はエリートたちによって運営されている。 有力な官僚たち、企業の経営者たち、有力な血 縁を持つ者たち。しかし、他の多くの国々が似 たような体制で運 営されているにもかかわらず、 日本の支配者層にはイデオロギーが欠如してい る。金銭をある種の哲学の発現と見なすのなら 別だが。

松下政経塾はコネを持たない政治家志望者が国政と地方自治の両方で当選することを助けたが、その過程で松下政経塾そのものがエリート主義の砦となって いった。松下政経塾には毎年約200 人の応募者があるが入塾を許されるの理のすか6名である。エリートに関する自明の理して、エリートはエリート同士でしか仲良っていというのがある。東京新聞のインタビュは、「水田町の満理」が染み 込んで選したにせょ、「永田町の論理」が染み 込んで

おり、それは、全ての政治活動は誰に同意するかに基づいて行われるというものである。彼らの政治人生の現実は、中心的人物である小沢一郎を支持する 党員は誰かという問題を巡る民主党内部の強迫観念に現れている。松下政経塾卒業生たちは、指導者の資質を養う方法としてトイレ掃除や書道を学ぶかもしれな いが、最終的にはいかに影響力を高めるかに尽きるわけで、それはカネなのだ。

官僚が中央政府を取り仕切っているのは秘密でも何でもないが、さらに先がある。現在の47都道府県知事のうち31人が、以前は様々な中央官庁に勤務していた経歴を持ち、官僚時代に共に働いた地方民間セクター関係者の協力で当選した者も多い。佐賀県と北海道の両知事は元経産省職員で、その家族は電力会社と古くからつながりがある。この二人の知事はどちらも、彼らの府県の原発を再稼働させようと動いている。

政策は上層部で決定されるが、平均的政治家の エリート主義が役に立つのは内部抗争ぐらい ものである。今月抜きんでているのは誰だ? れこそ菅直人が、野党だけでなく自分の党方を 員たちからも、あれほど悪意に満ちたやりが 時傷された理由である。彼は過去30年間のどが、 を理大臣よりも劣っているとは政界での、 おそらく彼は非政府団体『ロロロ』を通じてみる。 となるとなるということは政界でした。最初で最初で最後の総理大臣となるだろう。 した最初で最ものリーダーとして出発した。握られた民運動のリーダーとして出発した。握られては全くあり得ないことで、メディアをのだとなったとも含むエリートたちには許し難かったのだとも含むエリートたちには許した。 それを考えると、 があっただろうか?