

*“Housing Situation in Japan” by Kazuo Takashima*

*In Japan in 2005 a decrease in population started and the aging rate exceeded 20 %. The state reexamined the housing policy that they have had since the 1950s. It was a home ownership policy which has been based on mainly people's own efforts to pay and the social housing policy which has supplied a small number of social housing units for only people who have extreme difficulties securing their housing. In the 1990s some social housing landlord bodies were in financial difficulties with huge debts from the Bubble Bankruptcy and the long term depression. Reportedly about 40 % of private landlords have refused to rent to the elderly because of their fear of the tenants might need nursing care in the future. To cope with this situation the state converted the existing social housing policy into a new one. In 2011 they started to supply 600,000 social housing units, with nursing services for the aged that enterprises owned and managed.*

*This meant the state practically shifted the public rental housing responsibility of the nation to private companies. The state maintained the fundamental principle of the housing policy was for economic recovery, not social welfare. At the end of March of 2013 they supplied around 110,000 social housing units with nursing services for the aged, by offering subsidies and the preferential tax regime for enterprises. The state have privatized the largest social housing landlord body, the URA, since the late 1990s, to rebuild national economy. It withdrew from the sector of selling newly built housing. In 2007 the state reorganized "the Home Loan Corporation (HLC)" that the state established and financed in 1950 in order to promote the home ownership policy. The HLC was changed into "an assisted organization for private financial institutions". Yet the state has continued to maintain that the profit of their supporting enterprises should be the first consideration. The state refused to adopt the provision of "Housing Right" in the Japanese Constitution. This was because they do not want to lose the right to transfer social housing responsibilities to private companies and thus reduce the housing budget. On the other hand, the state has strictly restricted tenants' requests to secure their own housing. Now most tenants are being ordered out by the courts without being offered alternative housing. We worry that the state will promote privatizing the social housing system, sacrificing many people who have difficulties to secure their housing.*