

November 1955

Report, Korean Mission in Japan, 'Korean Sea-Laver Issue'

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Summary:

Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry's refusal of custom clearance on Korean sea-laver [seaweed] and the protest and the meeting following the incident

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SUBJECT: Korean Sea-Laver Issue

The Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry (hereinafter referred to as MITI), all of a sudden, issued to its various customs offices in Japan an order that Korean sea-laver imported into Japan after November 2, 1955 should not be granted customs clearance, on the pretext that the harvest time of Japanese sea-laver starts from November and the import of Korean sea-laver seriously affects the price of laver in the domestic markets to the detriment of the Japanese producers of sea-laver.

Upon receipt of this information, this office, on November 3, 1955, lodged a strong protest with the Japanese foreign office against the measures taken by the Japanese MITI in connection with the import of Korean sea-laver (gist of our protest against Japan is shown in the attached paper). The Japanese foreign office answered that it would make negotiation with the MITI in order to settle this issue. The Japanese foreign office's officials concerned frankly admitted such measures should not have been taken by the MITI.

The Japanese foreign office was considering that Korean sea-laver should be imported into Japan by means of withdrawing

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the suspension measure taken by the MITI, whereas the MITI officials insisted that Korean sea-laver should not be imported during the harvest time of Japanese sea-laver since the Fisheries Committee of the Japanese Diet was strongly against its import. Thus, the views of the two Ministries were conflicting.

On November 15, 1955, this office had a talk with the officials concerned of the Japanese MITI in regard to the suspension of customs clearance on Korean sea-laver. This office insisted that Korea was obliged to doubt whether Japan wishes to import Korean products on the basis of reciprocity and that the November 2-ban on the passage through Japanese customs offices of Korean sea-laver was not justifiable in international commercial practices, since Korean sea-laver in question had been already shipped out of Korea on November 1, having been granted the import permission from the Japanese Government which does not expire until November 25, 1955.

The Japanese officials of the MITI finally made concession, stating that the customs clearance would be granted on the condition that the Japanese importers of Korean sea-laver should not dispose of it at the Japanese market pending

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the harvest time of Japanese sea-laver. This looks like a sort of internal policy of Japan in regard to the marketing of sea-laver, but we have to think of the possibility that the sale price of Korean sea-laver might be affected adversely to the Korean side because of such arbitrary measures on marketing to be taken by the Japanese Government. Thus, this office firmly requested that the Japanese Government should guarantee the reasonable price for Korean sea-laver in the light of the current market price of sea-laver in Japan and grant customs clearance unconditionally for the Korean sea-laver in question.

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