

HEADQUARTERS  
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY  
(PACIFIC)  
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO

INTERROGATION NO. 304

PLACE: Tokyo  
DATE: 8 November 1945

Division of Origin: Basic Materials  
Subject: Coal Operations of Mitsui Mining Co.  
Personnel interrogated:  
KAWASHIMA, S. President of Mitsui Mining Co. since 1939;  
formerly mining and metallurgical engineer for  
Mitsui.  
Where interviewed: His Office.  
Interrogator: Lt. Comdr. D. A. BURR, Lt. R. E. BURNES  
Interpreter: Lt. E. A. MANNING  
Mr. FUJISAWA, former Mitsui manager in France.  
Allied Officers Present: No others.

SUMMARY

The interview was a general discussion accompanying a request for detailed statistical information of the company's operations and air raid damage suffered.

1. Problems of the industry during the war: labor, materials, raid damage.
2. Attempts at rationalization of the industry.
3. Price and wage structure.
4. Shipments.

**RESTRICTED**





Background of person interviewed.

Mr. Kawashima joined Mitsui in 1912 immediately following his graduation from the Imperial University. In 1939 he became president of the Mitsui Mining Company and has served in that capacity ever since. A mining and metallurgical engineer, he is very well-informed concerning Japan's coal industry.

1. Production problems in the coal industry during the war.

According to Mr. Kawashima, the most acute war-time problem was the shortage of experienced labor. Although the total number of miners did not decline to any appreciable extent, the employment of a greater quantity of foreigners, Koreans and Chinese, and Japanese short-term workers lowered individual efficiency markedly. The government refused to adopt a program of deferring skilled labor in the mining industry until 6 months before the end of the war in spite of the fact that industry frequently urged the government to adopt such a policy. Moreover, it was not until early in 1944 that the government enacted a law freezing mine labor. Prior to that time miners, attracted by higher wages and better working condition in other industries, left the mines in considerable numbers. Mr. Kawashima confirmed the fact that such a shifting of workers contributed in large measure to the decline in overall efficiency. The Coal Control Association on several occasions petitioned the government to adopt a job-freezing policy but the government took no action. From the first, according to Mr. Kawashima, the government was too optimistic over the outcome of the war and, since it was more interested in the military progress of the war and in the turning out of finished products, refused to pay sufficient attention to the industries producing the basic raw materials.

A second problem was the scarcity of essential materials and equipment. As the war progressed, it was almost impossible for the coal mining industry to procure new machinery, and the equipment in use deteriorated steadily.

Toward the end of the war allied air attacks interfered with production in some of the company's mining districts, particularly the Miike coal field in Kyushu. The incendiary raid of 27 July destroyed many of miners living quarters and office buildings. The pumping system stopped working and water flooded the pits. Recovery from this attack proved very difficult. Mr. Kawashima agreed to furnish a complete report on the effects of the air raids on the operations at the Miike mines.

2. The rationalization of the coal mining industry.

Mr. Kawashima stated that the government had not attempted to rationalize the coal mining industry until fairly late in the war. Finally the government ordered the Mitsui Mining Company to take over 3 mining companies, the Togawa and Yamato Companies in Kyushu and the Taiheiyo company in Hokkaido which were seen to be operating inefficiently. When asked why the government had not acted earlier, Mr. Kawashima noted the following reasons:

- (a) Government optimism regarding the outcome of the war.
- (b) The government's lack of knowledge of the coal mining industry.
- (c) The government overestimated the productive capacity of Japan's coal industry.
- (d) The lack of unity in the objectives in industrialists, government officials and military leaders.
- (e) The failure of government officials to consult with industry.
- (f) The inability of the government to convince the small mine owners that absorption by the more efficient large companies was essential.

Mr. Kawashima agreed that one of the primary functions of the Coal Control Association was to encourage such rationalization but pointed out that the Association never was equipped with sufficient power or authority to influence the government.



3. Coal prices and miners' wages.

Coal was purchased from the mining companies by the government at a price based on a cost plus profit system. Buying prices were fixed twice a year. The Industry presented to the Coal Control detailed data, including estimated costs, for the ensuing 6 months, which formed the basis of the prices eventually set. However, at the end of 3 months a statement of actual costs was presented, and changes in the price structure were then made.

Wages fell into 2 categories, fixed wages and piece-work wages. Fixed wages were set annually by the Ministry of Welfare, but wages for piece work were subject to fluctuation and could be increased or decreased by the companies at any time subject to the approval of the Welfare Ministry. As a general rule, wages for coal miners were the same all over the country, although slight variations might occur in certain areas. Japanese and Korean miners received the same wage for piece work. Special wages were paid to underground workers, but in spite of that fact miners' wages were considerably lower than the wages paid in other industries.

4. Shipment of coal from Mitsui's Miike mines.

Mr. Kawashima stated that about 1,000,000 tons of Miike coal were consumed in Kyushu before the war and that most of the balance had been shipped by sea to Honshu. After the summer of 1944 sea shipping became impossible, and all coal had to be transported by rail.