

## Towards a Sustainable Society\*

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### BASIC THEORIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM : THE JAPANESE EXPERIENCE

#### 1. From serious pollution problems to environmental problems

*Ever since the Meiji Restoration, Japan modernized and reformed the country in a western way. The course of modernization took England 300 years but Japan tried to accomplish the same in approximately a hundred years. Such rapid economic growth took place without the development of modern system of law for basic human right and democratization of society. As a consequence, all sorts of pollution and destruction of environment busted out. This is a phenomenon commonly found today in Asian countries.*

*Pollution control in the pre-World War II era had not been developed much. However, grassroot environmental movements were born and the principles of pollution control as we know today emerged during 1920s. For example, in 1929 de-sulfur dioxide from smoke was put to a practical use first in the world at the copper refinery in the Sumitomo Metal Mine. In 1914, the Hitachi Mine constructed a tallest chimney in the world for air pollution control. Both companies monitored the weather and took regulations accordingly. Osaka City Sanitation Laboratory monitored air pollution 24 hours and regulated smoke. It was a rare case in the world of that time.*

*However, scientific study of pollution, public opinions and movements against pollution problems were all put on hold until 1939 because of the economy crisis in 1929 and the World War II. The war and economy crisis delayed the development of pollution control not only in Japan, but also across the world. It is apparent in the paper published by WHO, shown in Figure 1.*

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\*Keynote lecture for 2003 International Symposium on Environmental Management : Policy, Research and Education. 6-9 November, 2003. Chiang Mai, Thailand.