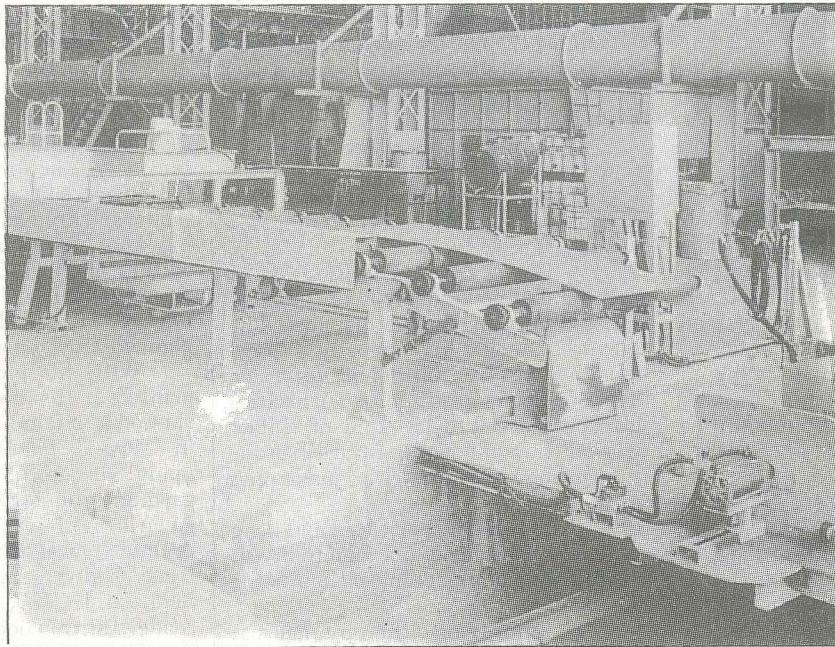


SUBURBAN LABORERS IN THE PERIOD OF NATIONAL INDUSTRIALIZATION

by Dr. HOÀNG THỊ CHÍNH



According to HCMC Statistics Bureau, area of farming land has been on the decrease in recent years, particularly it decreased 1,159 ha in 1993, by nearly 5% in comparison with 1992. It decreased strongly in Thủ Đức, Hóc Môn, Nhà Bè, because a lot of housing or industrial estates, roads and other public works were being built. This process will be continued until 2005 when urbanized area of suburban districts will occupy 22.7% (or 44,045 ha) of natural area of HCMC suburbs according to statistics of HCMC Institute of Town Planning Study).

Along with the farming area, agricultural labor force is also on the decrease (in 1993, it decreased by 6% in comparison with 1992). It's the inevitable we should accept in the process of industrialization and modernization. But there come many problems on the suburban laborers' fate which should be studied and solved.

Firstly, the rate of unemployment in HCMC suburbs is increasing. Six suburban districts of HCMC comprising 98 villages, house 726,834 laborers and some 85,000 or 90,000 of which are jobless. According to estimation of HCMC Service of Labor, War Invalid and Social Affairs, there is an increase of 45,000 or 50,000 persons in suburban labor force every years, and the unemployed will increase by 15,000-20,000 persons per year. The causes of unemployment are as follows:

- Non-agricultural occupations (secondary and service occupations) are under-developed.

- Farming land area became smaller, farm machinery replaced human labor and the new management mechanism encouraged land owners to increase the output and reduce the input, so many farm-hands were fired.

Secondly, the form of seasonal unemployment has come into being. In fact, in many districts, during harvest, there is a shortage of farm-hands. According to a recent survey conducted

in 14 villages of Binh Chánh district in the summer-autumn crop last year, the supply of labor could only satisfy around 60% or 70% of total labor demand. In Nhà Bè district, the daily wage for a transplanting worker varies from VND 20,000 to 25,000, and from 18,000 to 20,000 for a seedling uprooting worker, but the land owners continued to go short of laborers and they have to hire farm-hands from Long An, Tiền Giang...

This situation originated from young laborer leaving suburbs for a job in big cities. They can do anything there: tricyclist, dockworker, mason... They can earn only VND 15,000-20,000 per day but this income is stable, whereas the income of farmers is at risk because of the weather, or changing price of agricultural products. Besides, the young generation is attracted by the living way in big cities.

Thirdly, the level of education and training of suburban laborers is too low. They can't find a job in industrial and service sectors. According to a

labor and population census at Nhâm Đức village, Nhà Bè district, of 3,305 laborers surveyed, 1,757 had primary education degree (around 50%), and 230 are illiterates (nearly 7%). This is a common situation in other villages and districts. Therefore, having no skill, they had to do simple, hard and low-wage works. As for laborers who stay on at their home district, they can't also find a job in local factories because of their level of education. These factories had to recruit workers from other districts.

Realizing this situation, local authorities have made plans to train the young generation in foreign languages, informatics or manual skills, but because of a low level of general education, these suburban laborers can only achieve small results in their learning.

Fourthly, in recent land fever, many farmers have sold part of their farming land with a view to raising their living standard. Becoming rich suddenly, they pursued luxurious lives and threw their money about instead of having their children educated and trained fully in order to help them find a job in factories, export processing zones or tourist resorts which will be built in their home districts in urbanization process.

Fifthly, social evils are spreading fast in suburban districts. Many young people fell into bad habits of big city living way.

In order to solve these problems and orient the suburban laborers towards better development, I would like to suggest the following:

1. The best way is to supply jobs at their home districts. This could be done by taking many measures to encourage agriculture, supply low interest loans, stabilize prices of farming materials, support farm product price...

2. Developing non-agricultural occupations in order to help suburban laborers get jobs and improve their income: The government should try hard to change the structure of industry in suburbs. The relative importance of each of three basic sectors in 2005 could be as follows: The primary sector (farming, forestry, fishing) occupies 30-35% of gross product, the secondary sector (manufacturing, handicraft) 40-45%, and the service sector 20-25%. The local authorities should pay attention to principal problems such as capital, skill and technique, and market. They should have plans to create jobs at their home localities.

3. Educating and training systematically the suburban laborers in various skills in order to help them

adapt themselves to the changing economy. This task could be done by the local authorities and businesses operating in suburbs. The following are some suggested measures:

- People's Committee in every village carries out census on laborers and their level of education in order to make plan to train and employ them.

- The matter of great urgency now is to improve the primary education in suburbs. In this task, a lot of problems should be solved: quantity and quality of teachers (and their salaries), school building, limiting the number of dropping-out pupils. In schools, the pupils should be trained in foreign languages and oriented towards new occupations which will be developed in their home districts.

- Opening night classes for those who are going to the service sector, especially in urbanizing districts such as Thủ Đức, Nhà Bè, Bình Chánh, Hóc Môn...

- The local authorities could recommend good laborers to the businesses operating in the districts. The businesses could give priority to local laborers when recruitment takes place. They could keep the local authorities informed about what kind of skilled worker they will need in future in order to help the local authorities make plan for it.

- The local authorities could keep back a percentage of tax take to invest in education and training of their home districts.

4. Improving the intellectual standard of the suburban people by various activities: opening village library and theatre, making films on new agricultural technique, cultural living..., developing forms of distant-learning, forming fund of culture in each district to finance cultural and information activities, exempting taxes on businesses of culture and arts... In short, improving the intellectual standard of the people is an urgent matter because low educational level is a big obstacle to the process of industrialization and modernization in rural areas.

5. The local authorities should combine with the police and other social organizations to struggle against the social evils which tend to spread in HCMC suburbs.

These above-mentioned problems, in my opinion, should be solved as quickly as possible. They need many active and strong measures. Not solving them timely, the process of industrialization in our country, or in HCMC to be precise, couldn't make desirable progress.

The strategic and outstanding feature of Hữu Nghị Garment Company is products of high quality for export made in Vietnam. Established since 1990 in newly-formed market economy and in the fastest developing region of the world, the products "made in Vietnam" of Hugamex, especially its jacket, have won customers' trust and support. Along with other businesses, Hugamex has sold its products all over the world and helped Vietnam become the ninth biggest supplier of garment in Japan market (behind China, South Korea, the USA and other giants).

In order to satisfy foreign customers' demand for fashionable and high-quality garments in an era of information and economic integration, Baron, a California-based publisher, has answered the question "Who is the maker of these garments?" by publishing *Who's who of the Asian-Pacific Rim*, edition of 1995. The answer given in this book is: It's Hugamex and its director, Cao Sơn Ngọc, address: 638 Nguyễn Duy, district 8, HCMC.

With his picture and biography printed in this book, Mr. Ngọc is considered as a famous Asian businessman in 1995-1996. Naturally, there are many successful businesspersons in garment industry, or in Vietnam in general, but few of them can make their products well-known. Besides Mr. Ngọc, Nguyễn Xuân Lập, director of Saphaco, HCMC, is also introduced to readers in this book.

The quality of Hugamex's products has been appreciated by both local and foreign customers. In our time, garment products should be durable, attractive and fashionable. This means that the producer should supply products to customers on time. Therefore, the producer has to fulfil all requirements of design, quality, quantity, day of delivery and other terms of a contract. Hugamex has done it well. Even Japan, a very strict customer, has accepted the label "Made in Vietnam" on Hugamex's products. Because of trustworthiness of Hugamex, the customers needn't send specialists to Vietnam in order to make sure their orders are filled properly. Moreover, the wage they should pay to Hugamex is usually higher than other companies by 25 or 30 per cent.

How can Hugamex do its business so well? Can other companies follow it? These are what the delegation from Economic Division of VCP committee in HCMC wanted to know when it paid a visit to Hugamex on Nov 17, 1994.

It's only a brief visit, but we saw that the causes of Hugamex success could be as follows: