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BLL Demands That The Government Spell Out The Remaining Subjects And Study Legislative, Administrative And Financial Measures For Dowa Policy

The Buraku Liberation League (BLL) had a dialogue with the Management and Coordination Agency in the agency's office on February 19. The BLL questioned the agency about the responsibility of the government in Dowa policy, the administrative policy to shift the Regional Improvement Measures into general measures and the possibility of continuation of the Office for Regional Improvement Measures in the agency.

The agency responded as follows;

----As far as Buraku discrimination exists, it is the responsibility of the national government to realize a speedy solution.

----With regards to the each of the projects, for example, the scholarship system, the Consultative Council on Regional Improvement Measures(Consultative Council) has held discussions with the help of statistics.

----If the Law Regarding the Special Fiscal Measures of the Government for Regional Improvement Projects expire, the Office for Regional Improvement Measures



BLL dialogue with the Management and Coordination Agency

will be automatically closed. The agency is now studying future policy with the idea that they will work on human rights in general, focusing on the Dowa problem.

Mr. Kawabe, the chief of the Office,

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explained that the Consultative Council had reported to them that the ministries and agencies concerned were studying the policy after holding a hearing with organizations including the BLL on January 18. The Consultative Council, he said, will choose five draft committee members to summarize the opinions until the end of March. However, he did not show any concrete idea of the policy for the immediate future.

The BLL suggested that the agency should spell out the remaining subjects while they pointed out that local governments would continue the Dowa projects as far as discrimination exists. The BLL criticized the position of the Consultative Council regarding the shifting into general measures as a precondition although the ruling parties have an agreement to request the administration to study legislative, administrative and financial measures.

The BLL expressed concern about the possible negative aspects in the Dowa projects without legislation which have brought the three government-assured financial background; special subsidies, local government bonds, local allocation tax.

The government has been implementing the projects specifically designated to Dowa districts since the general measures could not cover the districts well, the BLL stressed. It is not reasonable for the Consultative Council, the BLL said, to consider the shift as a precondition, when surveys show there is a still difference in living standard between the Buraku people and non-Buraku people.

During the dialogue, a resolution seeking for the enactment of a Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation was submitted to the Office by the Shinshu Ohtani Sect of Buddhism.

***Discriminatory Remarks On NHK Midnight Radio
Introducing New York Times Article***

--BURAKU 'Success Story' Is To Become Yakuza Boss --

On Dec. 1, 1995, a midnight radio program of NHK(Japan Broadcasting Corporation) gave a report from New York. In the program a reporter mentioned an article on Buraku problems appearing in the New York Times issued on Nov. 30. The following are a few of the comments made on the air: "The IQs of Buraku children are lower than those of the national average"; "The arrest rate of Buraku youths is three times as high as non-

Buraku youths"; and "There is a saying that a 'success story' among Buraku people is to become a Yakuza boss."

NHK sent a report to explain the case to the BLL Central Headquarters. Talks are under way between the two parties.

The remarks in the program were made by the reporter in the form of introducing news in summary in New York. He picked up the article of the New York Times issued on Nov.



30, which was written by a reporter of the paper living in Tokyo. Mentioning the Buraku, the reporter put it to the effect on the radio "Japan's invisible minority ... better off than in the past, but still discriminated". The same article of the New York Times was also run on the Mainichi Daily News.

NHK submitted a report on this discriminatory incident on Dec. 6, '95. In the report they said that the remarks in question were interrupted by an announcer and that some listeners called NHK to protest during the program. The Central Headquarters of the BLL and NHK will meet to discuss the matter.

Later, on Dec.27, NHK broadcasted some commentaries on the 'Report of the Dowa Measure Council' and the 'Government Survey on Facts in Buraku'. They also said that they are designing to continue such programs and making contacts and reports to enforce a study system on the Buraku.

The BLL Central Headquarters demanded that NHK take up Buraku problems in a positive and continuous way, giving consideration to the content of such programs and a study system.

As to the article of the New York Times, investigation is under way. Some action may be taken as soon as it is reviewed in detail.

Not only Buraku people, but also Koreans living in Japan were discriminated against in the program, as indicated in the following phrases: '...Buraku and Korean people have a large membership among gangsters' a cooperated action with relevant organizations should be taken against such discrimination.

--Abstracts of the content of the NHK's radio program, 'Shin-ya-bin(Midnight Delivery)' are as follows.

"Buraku people were formally emancipated in 1871. But they were still discriminated against seriously in society. Only recently no apparent discrimination has been seen. Today almost two-thirds of Buraku persons say in opinion polls that they have never encountered discrimination. About 73 percent now marry non-Buraku people.

Though no apparent discrimination has been seen on the surface of society, it still exists deep underground, as they are an occupational minority group rather than a racial one, which is distinguishable in appearance. And mass media tend to put the matter under taboo, being afraid of accusation.

In the 1960's Buraku districts were immediately recognizable as slums. The situation of living has been much improved by the government. Yet the average income for Buraku families is still only 60 percent of the national average. Alcoholics are quite a few. Single parents are almost twice as common in the Buraku as in the nation as whole. Under such circumstances, five percent of Buraku people are on welfare, seven times the rate in the overall population. Furthermore, Buraku children have lower IQs than non-Buraku children.

According to a statistical study conducted by Americans in the 1960's, youths in the Buraku community were three times as likely as non-Buraku youths to be arrested for crime. The reason for the high crime rate may be because they see that they are neglected by middle class society and are inclined to giving up their responsibility. So many Buraku and Korean people go to become gangsters, Buraku people say among themselves that their 'success story' is to be a Yakuza boss. "



*Discrimination Took Away Two Lives
Suicide Because Of Marriage Discrimination
Shiga Prefecture*

A tragedy happened in 1994. Two people committed suicide because of marriage discrimination. The case ended in the worst result. Both Ms. A who is from the Buraku, and Mr. B who worked at the same company of Ms. A and is not from the Buraku, committed suicide.

A worker of a security company found Ms. A (29 years old) lying in the street in Shiga Pref. around 5 AM on June 30th in 1994. Ms. A was already dead at that time. She had climbed to the roof of a building by using the emergency stairs and jumped off.

Ms. A had a relationship with Mr. B since 1993 and decided to get married. She met Mr. B's parents on June 27, 1994. They expressed their opposition to their son marrying Ms. A. Ms. A was very depressed by this and decided to commit suicide.

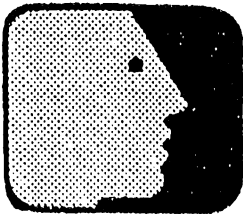
On November 2, 1994, Mr. B poisoned himself on Ms. A's birthday. He left a short note saying, "I want to take a long dream."

Two precious lives were ended. The Buraku Liberation League Shiga Pref. Kohga County Council performed an inquiry into the case to prevent other suicides because of marriage discrimination. They asked their families, their friends and their company to find out the truth and its connection to discrimination.

* Mr. B's parents said that they were opposed to the marriage because Ms. A was

seven years older than Mr. B. (Mr. B's mother is actually five years older than her husband.) They claimed that they did not know Ms. A was from the Buraku. But it came out later that they knew that she was from the Buraku. On the other hand, Ms. A's family were very discouraged about investigating the truth, saying that they want to be left with their wound. (Do not wake up a sleeping child.) But the harsh fact that the couple killed themselves cannot be ignored.

We cannot list all the cases where discrimination appeared against Buraku people at big turning points in their lives such as marriage. Young people get hurt deeply in the transition of their lives. The situation of a society where human rights are not sufficiently enlightened puts extra repression on an individual. It is natural to feel hopeless rather than to get angry when one loses his/her choice of life by identifying that he/she is from the Buraku. It is vital to foster the power to protest against discrimination in individuals, at work, at home, in communities, and everywhere. Not many cases like this appear in public. But still, many people investigate where people come from. There are still many factors which trigger such tragedies like this all over society.



Buraku Problem Q & A



Dowa Education

Q

Please explain about Dowa Education. I am afraid that Dowa Education might affect the scholastic achievement of the children.

A

The aim of Dowa Education is to teach the Buraku problems correctly. The various discriminatory cases show how dangerous it is to be ignorant of the Buraku problems. Discrimination originates in the ignorance of the truth. Learning about the Buraku problems correctly is very essential for the Buraku people as well. Though this learning gives them pain just like cutting out their own bodies, it is inevitable to do so to know the origin of the pain they have now. They have to continue studying to overcome and terminate discrimination.

Buraku people are the victims in the Buraku problems. Victims are the products of the assailants. Therefore, learning about Buraku problems correctly is important for everyone of us. It is necessary to teach it not only at school but also at home with help from schools.

Learning about the Buraku problems is not just getting various knowledge. It is to recognize correctly what is happening around us, at home and in our communities, and to learn about people who support our lives and their efforts.

Learning about the Buraku problems is, in a word, to know the meaning of valuing human rights. We will learn where our pains come from; we will know the pains of other people; and, we



Free school textbooks were given to all pupils in an elementary school in 1964 (photo by The Kochi Shimbun)

will gain the power to overcome difficulties by cooperating with others through the learning process.

The people who can get good scores, but do not have an interest in what happens in society, and do not appreciate their own homes and the hardships of their parents, will easily lose their confidence when they face some minor difficulties. Real scholastic achievement can be gained through having vitality and the desire to learn. Therefore, learning about the Buraku problems accelerates the learning of the basic subjects.

Dowa Education has been guaranteeing the right of education for the children in the Buraku whose educational opportunities had been taken away for a long time.

The following are the problems which the children in Buraku have been facing. Nobody is in charge of the class which just started a new semester. Teachers are transferring one after another during a school year. Some children in the same school district go to a school in other districts. The facilities of the schools deteriorate and never improve. Some children do not have any desks for studying at home, and spend most of their time helping their parents work. Some can not go to higher grade because of economical reasons or their poor scholastic achievement at school. They can find employment through their relatives or somebody they know, but they often have to leave and change jobs. Those situations are still not completely improved now.

To solve those problems, teachers and parents have been cooperating and making various efforts. They brought back the children who could not go to school for a long time or who never had been there because of poverty. Then they started the movement to demand free compulsory education textbooks for children who could not afford to buy them. Because of the movement, the measure for free distribution was established in 1963.

In 1968, they took up the problem of enrollment in another school districts. Schools whose students were mainly from poor families had been in a poor educational environment because these students' parents could not donate money to build new facilities. But after the movement, construction of new buildings and restructuring of facilities was completed. They also campaigned to set the maximum per class limit at 30 students in order to teach students more effectively. These improvements of the educational environment brought advantages to students who were not in the Buraku communities as well as Buraku students.

School education has to ensure that all children achieve solid scholastic ability. On the contrary, schools now have a serious problem with dropouts who cannot read, write, or calculate. Dowa education investigates the cause of dropping out; rearranges the content and the method; decreases the number of students per class; increases the number of teachers; and demands the improvement of facilities.

Results appear in some public junior high schools in Osaka Pref. which are Dowa Education



Promoting Schools and have Buraku communities inside of their districts. The average percentage of the graduates in Osaka Pref. who went to national and other public high schools (excluding night high schools) in March, 1988 was 53.9%. The percentage of non-Buraku students of Dowa Education Promoting Schools going to high schools is 63%, and the percentage of Buraku students is 59.2%. When we think about the past when the percentage of going on to higher education for both non-Buraku and Buraku students in promoting schools was lower than the average, we have to admit that the efforts of improving the basic scholastic achievement of Buraku children is improving the scholastic achievement of all students.

DOWA EDUCATION:

EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE TOWARD A DISCRIMINATION-FREE JAPAN

edited by Yasumasa HIRASAWA and Yoshiro NABESHIMA

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The Buraku Liberation Research Institute has published several English-language books on Buraku issues, particularly on Buraku history and movement. Our bimonthly newsletters have been sent to nearly 1,000 readers all over the world. However, there was none specifically on Dowa education, an educational commitment to solve problems caused by discrimination against the caste-like minority group called Burakumin or Buraku people. Dowa education is also one of the broadest educational coalitions to promote the respect of human rights and democracy in Japan.

As we were receiving an increasing number of inquiries from researchers, educators, journalists and NGOs abroad on Dowa education, we decided to produce a comprehensive booklet on Dowa education to illustrate its history and pressing agenda. We believe that we need to disseminate abroad more information on Japan's human rights education activities. This publication commemorates also the start of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education.

The booklet consists mainly of two parts: Part One includes 1) Definition of Dowa Education, 2) Features of the Japanese School System, and 3) Zendokyo and Others: Teachers' Commitment to Dowa Education. Part Two includes 1) Dwa Education as Human Rights, 2) Dowa Education about Human Rights, 3) Educational Activities in the Community, and 4) Challenges for Dowa Education. These are followed by glossary and bibliography. It should be noted that all the contributions are not translations of some existing Japanese articles but were particularly written for this booklet.

We intended to cover the basic outline of Dowa education and also to add new perspectives of Dowa education; global human rights education and Dowa education; Dowa education in the community, etc. We also employed the common language of global human rights education such as 'education as human rights' and 'education about human rights' to examine features of Dowa education in comparison to other human rights education initiatives in the world. The glossary and the bibliography are both quite comprehensive and make this booklet a good springboard for those who want to study further about Dowa education.