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Aiming at the Enactment of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation at the Next Diet Session

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The 136th Diet session, at which we had expected the enactment of a Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation sought by us since May 1985, was closed on June 19.

While it did not come true, we made crucial progress, including what we have so far seen an opinion report of the Consultative Council on Regional Improvement Measures, three points of agreements among the ruling coalition of the government, a statement of the Director General of the Management and Coordination Agency, and the discussion in the Diet and others. I would like to enumerate the fruits of our progress one by one.

The first fruit is that the

Consultative Council on Regional Improvement Measures, organized by the Management and Coordination Agency, offered their opinion to the government on May 17. The report pointed out as follows :

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(1) While the Buraku discrimination problem has been solved to a certain extent through the measures for years, discrimination still clearly exists.

(2) As a basic understanding,

---the solution to the Buraku discrimination is still an important subject in Japanese society, and the Report on the Dowa Policy Council submitted in 1965 should be continuously respected.

---regarding the 21st century as the century of human rights, the solution to discrimination problems, including the Buraku problem, is an obligation in the international community as far as Japan has acceded to international laws on human rights, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

---considering the Dowa problem as one of the human rights problems, efforts should be exerted to solve problems related to human rights.

---the expiration of the current Law Regarding the Special Fiscal Measures of the Government for Regional Improvement Projects does not mean the abandonment of Dowa measures. The solution to Buraku discrimination should be actively sought, including a legislative measure.

(3) As concrete measures,



A rally seeking for the Fundamental Law

photo by Kaiho Shimbun

---As to elimination of deep-rooted discrimination consciousness prevailing up to the present, education and enlightenment should be strengthened. The achievement in the past should be developed into human rights education and human rights enlightenment where Dowa education will be placed as an important pillar.

The policy making for the UN decade for Human Rights Education should get along with this viewpoint.

---It is necessary to initiate a study to set up a relief institution for victims of human rights violations, considering the fact that there have been continuous human rights violations related to Buraku discrimination in the absence of effective relief institution.

---It is necessary to study future projects to improve discriminatory social conditions by taking into account the realities of discrimination, ordinary government projects, and financial background of local governments without damaging the achievement brought by



the measures up to the present.

As a second fruit, Mr Sekisuke Nakanishi, the Director General of the Management and Coordination Agency, marked one step forward by his statement upon the release of the above-mentioned report by the Consultative Council on Regional Improvement Measures.

He said, "The government would like to respect the report and concretely study all possible measures, including legislation to realize the recommendations in the report. In addition, the government intends to closely cooperate with the ruling coalition to make an early solution to Buraku discrimination since the coalition has been tackling the issue by forming the Project Team on Human Rights and Discrimination Problems."

As a third fruit, the ruling coalition's Project Team reached an agreement of three points regarding legislation on June 5 after having met 31 times of meeting.

The agreement was approved by the Coordination Meeting of the Ruling Coalition on June 7 and the Top-level Meeting of the Ruling Coalition on June 10. The agreement was as follows:

(1) A legislative measure for the promotion of education and enlightenment.

The government will study the legislative measure for the promotion of education and enlightenment based upon

the report by the Consultative Council on Regional Improvement Measures and the Action Program for the UN Decade for Human Rights Education in order to eliminate the deep-rooted discrimination consciousness of citizens over the Dowa problem.

(2) A legislative measure for the relief of victims of human rights violations.

There are still quite a few human rights violations inflicted on Buraku people and there are many defects in the present system. As to the solution the government will study a new system, including a legislative measure.

(3) A legislative measure for special projects for regional improvement.

Based upon the report by the Consultative Council on Regional Improvement Measures, the government will seek a legislative measure by studying the remaining subjects, the financial background of local governments without damaging the achievements brought by the measures up to the present.

As a fourth fruit, Mr. Nakanishi replied for the prompt enactment of a law in the Diet session in response to a question connected to the agreement of the ruling coalition.

He strongly addressed the legislative measure for the promotion of education and enlightenment, i.e., a certain concrete step should be quickly



taken by any means. As to the legislation on special projects, he answered that the agency would come to a conclusion by July, considering the estimated budget for the next fiscal year.

As a fifth fruit, the New Frontier Party, the largest opposition party, introduced a bill in the Diet, a Fundamental Law for the Dowa Measure. The party that had been putting the bill into shape introduced it on June 14, shortly before the closing of the Diet session.

The bill was discarded on June 19 because of the absence of the final conclusion of the ruling coalition and the lack of discussion between the coalition and opposition parties.

However, it was very significant that even the largest opposition party is basically in favor of the legislation. The situation will propel the preparation of the law by the ruling coalition.

As a sixth fruit, many of the local governments are also concerned about the legislative measure. Ordinances and declarations based upon the bill of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation have been increasing in number.

As of July 7 in 1996, 5 ordinances and 6 declarations have been adopted at the prefectural level as well as 402 ordinances and 878 declarations at the city and municipal levels.

As I stated above, we made a

crucial step even though the law was not enacted at the 136th Diet session.

In this background, there have been for years the continued and active campaigns and petitions of both the Central and Local Executive Committee for the National Movement to Demand Legislation of the Fundamental Law for the Buraku Liberation led by the Buraku Liberation League to various sectors, including the government and political parties.

The campaign has been joined by several organizations, including the Industrial Federation on the Dowa Problem, the Solidarity Conference of Religious Groups for the Solution of the Dowa Problem, the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, the National Association of Dowa Education Study.

As a result of the campaign, the Fundamental Law is likely to be enacted with the provisions of education & enlightenment, relief system and special projects as stated in the bill of the law drafted by the Central Executive Committee for the National Movement to Demand Legislation of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation.

The campaign should be further strengthened in order that the law will be legislated in line with the bill by the Central Executive Committee at the extraordinary session of the Diet this September in succession to the active campaign during the 136th Diet session.



Mr. Saichiro Uesugi, President of the BLL , Passed Away.



Mr Saichiro Uesugi

Mr. Saichiro Uesugi, president of the Buraku Liberation League, passed away on May 10 at a hospital in Fukuoka City due to liver failure (please see the Extra Edition of the Buraku Liberation News, May 1996). He was 77 years old.

The BLL sponsored-funeral was held on June 3 in Fukuoka City attended by eight thousand people. Condolences were offered by Mr. Masayoshi Ohnishi, acting president of the BLL, Mr. Tomiichi Murayama, a former Prime Minister, and Mr. Sekisuke Nakanishi, Director General of the Management and Coordination Agency. A message was read on behalf of Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Prime Minister.

While those present mourned his death before the enactment of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation, they vowed to pursue his will for the

Buraku liberation.

Mr. Uesugi was born in a Buraku area in Ogohri City, Fukuoka Prefecture in 1919. After he finished elementary school, he worked as a coal miner in Hokkaido. Before the Second World War he joined the Buraku liberation movement after meeting the late Mr. Jiichiro Matsumoto, then the leader of the movement .

Mr. Uesugi had successively held various important posts in the BLL and led the struggle. He assumed the post of the president in 1982. He played a major role in organizing the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, an international NGO in solidarity with other NGOs both in Japan and other countries in 1988. He was an advisor of the Buraku Liberation Research Institute for many years.

Mr. Masayoshi Ohnishi assumes as acting president.

Mr. Masayoshi Ohnishi, the vice president of the BLL, assumed office as acting president according to the decision at the Central Executive Committee of the BLL on May 12 after the death of Mr. Uesugi. The new president will be elected at the 53rd National Convention being held on September 6-8.



Discriminatory Incidents in Osaka Increased in 1995.

The Head Office of Denunciation Tactics of the Osaka Federation of the Buraku Liberation League (BLL) recently reported that the number of discriminatory incidents uncovered in Osaka in 1995 totaled 252 cases.

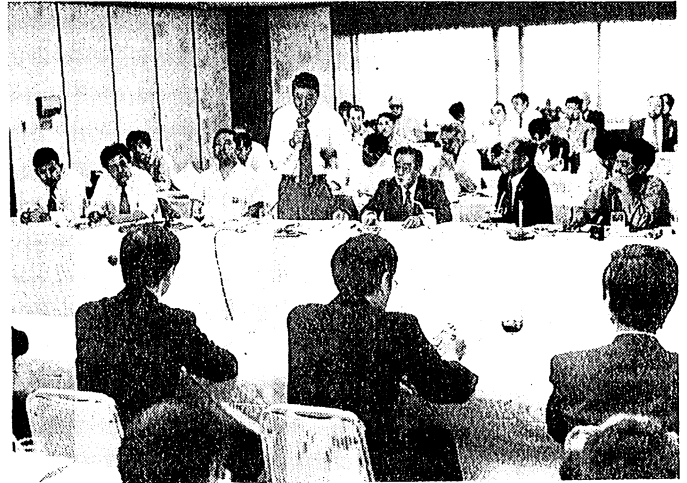
According to the report, this is an increase of 35 cases compared to the year before. The statistics clearly deny allegations made by some people that discrimination has been fading away.

While data on Buraku discrimination was compiled by the Osaka Prefectural and City governments and the Osaka Federation of the BLL, other data came mainly from the Board of Education.

Buraku discrimination constitutes 172 cases, followed by ethnic discrimination (66 cases), discrimination against the handicapped (11 cases), and others (3 cases).

Among the incidents of Buraku discrimination, 100 cases were found in graffiti and stickers in public places, 40 cases in remarks, 19 cases in telephone calls, 10 cases in letters, and others (3 cases).

Discriminatory incidents were found at schools, including 3 cases at



A denunciation session to a local government by BLL

photo by Kaiho Shimbun

elementary schools, 13 cases at junior high schools, 31 cases at high schools, and 9 cases at universities. 4 cases came to light in post offices.

“The incidents which are certainly propelled by mixed feelings of superiority and inferiority have been increasing in number. In addition, we found an increasing trend, in which people who are frustrated in society resort to discriminatory actions to relieve themselves. Since we guess there are lot more cases that were not uncovered, we have to strengthen our efforts to enlighten people to put an end to such incidents,” said Mr Kitaguchi, the Undersecretary General of the Head Office of Denunciation Tactics of the BLL Osaka.



Court Orders Compensation for Cancellation of Marriage by Reason of Buraku Discrimination.

In May the Osaka district court ruled on a civil suit filed by a woman, 29 years old, from a Buraku area who was demanding 26 million yen as compensation for her and her child from a man who had allegedly canceled their common-law relation under the influence of his mother who had prejudice toward Buraku people, in spite of the fact that a child was born to them.

The judge who ruled in favor of the plaintiff ordered the man and his mother to pay her 4.1million yen. According to the decision, the woman delivered a baby boy in 1988, during the time she lived with the defendant for three years. The man neither registered their marriage nor recognized the child. The man's mother continued to oppose their

relationship. The man finally went back to his home in May 1990 leaving the woman and the child behind.

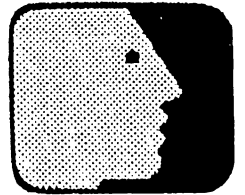
The plaintiff alleged that the man was gradually influenced by his mother who had prejudice toward Buraku people. She demanded compensation for herself and her child, alleging that the man did not recognize the child because of a discriminatory consciousness.

The defendant, on the other hand, insisted that he canceled the relationship not because of discrimination but because of incompatibility.

The ruling pointed out that behind this case there was the potential for discrimination toward the plaintiff's neighborhood on the part of the defendant's neighborhood.



Buraku Problem Q & A (12)



Discrimination or Jealousy ?

Q Since the living environment of Buraku areas has been improved, some of non-Buraku people feel that they are discriminated against. What can you say about this ?

A You would come across a high-class residential area along a quiet street where each house has well-kept gardens. While you might envy the houses and the area, you wouldn't get

irritated or angry with the residents. At worst, you might want one for yourself, even to the point of jealousy.

However, you might be jealous, hateful feeling toward nice houses under the special projects for Dowa measures and residents there. Why is this? You might think Buraku people have been specially treated.

The fact is that Buraku people are not the only ones specially treated. In addition, some specially treated people are hated and others are not. People who are hated are mostly discriminated against, such as Buraku people and the handicapped.

You would be irritated when you feel that you are even partially surpassed by people who you consider to be in a lower position than you are.

It is sad to say, but those who are not well-off sometimes tend to be jealous of the improvement of the living environment in Buraku areas. Although it is said that Japan is today one of the richest countries in the world, we do not actually have such a feeling.

Since the government has reduced the budget for welfare and education, in line with a policy of administrative reform, people feel that they have become poorer. Thus the budget for Dowa projects came to draw people's attention. Those who are jealous do not join together in order to protect their own life. However, it is not possible to improve the living standard if people are only jealous of each other.

Buraku areas have been neglected by the administration as a result of a centuries-old discrimination, without

proper infrastructure projects, including housing. For instance, the administration had not installed even a fireplug in many Buraku areas where the houses had stood close together. In the past people were rendered homeless by big fires.

Dowa measures have been implemented to get rid of such discrimination in the administrative projects. However, the government has not explained well the reason of the Dowa projects to people living outside Buraku areas. As a result, some people feel that they are discriminated against by the administration when they compare themselves to Buraku people.

Implementation of the Dowa measures leads to the improvement of the quality of life of all the people as well as the improvement of Buraku areas that were the most disadvantaged areas in the past. Dowa measures certainly would bring a positive effect to the entire society.

For example, the system of free textbooks for all the children in compulsory public school started as a Dowa measure in response to one of the demands of the Buraku liberation movement and were applied to all pupils. Community halls, parks and playing grounds constructed in Buraku areas benefit not only Buraku people but also non-Buraku people as public facilities.

