



# Buraku Liberation News

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## *Mr Takumi Ueda, the New President of the BLL*



*The 53<sup>rd</sup> National Convention of the BLL*

*photo by the Kaiho Shimbun*

The 53<sup>rd</sup> National Convention of the Buraku Liberation League was held in Tokyo on September 6-8, about one thousand representatives from the various branches and prefectural federations of the Buraku Liberation League (BLL) participated.

At the convention, Mr Takumi Ueda, a former member of the Lower House and Secretary-General of the BLL, was elected as President of the BLL, succeeding former President Mr Saichiro Uesugi, who passed away in

May of this year.

Mr Shigeyuki Kumisaka, a member of the Central Executive Committee of the BLL, was elected as Secretary-General while Mr Masato Takahashi, member of the Central Executive Committee and President of the Osaka Prefectural Federation of the BLL was elected as Director of the Financial Committee.

Ms Akiko Kishida was chosen as one of the five vice-presidents, and is the first woman appointed for that position.

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Mr Ueda, the new President, was a member of the Lower House from 1976 to 1993 in succession after holding office as the President of the Osaka Prefectural Federation of the BLL. After that, he was the Secretary-General of the BLL.

The convention adopted several resolutions, including a policy for the enactment of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation ( We will carry more report about it in the next issue).

## *More Efforts toward the Enactment of the Fundamental Law by Taking Advantage of the Cabinet's Conclusions*

by Kenzo Tomonaga

Director of the Buraku Liberation Research Institute

As we already reported in the previous issue (No. 91), the ruling coalition's Project Team on Human Rights and Discrimination Problems reached an agreement on June 5 on three points regarding legislation in face of the expiration of the Law Regarding the Special Fiscal Measures of the Government for Regional Improvement Projects in March 1997.

The agreement was approved in 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) *Legislative measures for the promotion of education and enlightenment.*

\* The government will study the legislative measures for the promotion of education and enlightenment based upon

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

(2) *Legislative measures 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. Towards a solution the government will study a new system, including legislative measures.

(3) *Legislative measures for special projects for regional improvement.*

Based upon the report by the Consultative Council on Regional Improvement Measures, the government



will seek legislative measures by studying the remaining subjects, the financial background of local governments without interfering in the achievements of the measures up to the present.

Mr. Nakanishi, the Director General of the Management and Coordination Agency, replied for the prompt enactment of a law in the Diet session on June 20 in response to a question connected to the agreement of the ruling coalition.

He strongly addressed the legislative measures for the promotion of education and enlightenment, i.e., certain concrete steps 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.

In July, the ruling coalition's Project Team had series of meetings. Upon reaching an agreement on legislation for special projects, they proposed to the government for it to be brought into force. However, they did neither reach a consensus about measures for the promotion of education & enlightenment, nor for measures for the relief of victims of human rights violations.

In response, the Cabinet concluded at the meeting on July 26 a policy entitled the Future Measures Seeking an Early Solution to the Dowa Problem.

According to this policy, the

government will take financial measures by legislation for not more than five years to continue some projects which will have not been completed by ongoing measures by the end of March 1997, including infrastructure projects, such as road construction and sewage projects.

In addition, subsidies provided to individuals, including scholarship projects for high school students from Dowa areas will be included in the legislation because a shift of such projects into ordinary measures could bring negative effects at present.

On the other hand, projects which still need to be improved before being directly shifted into ordinary measures, such as running of the nursery and the community hall will be specially subsidized as ordinary projects.

Projects which are not covered by the above-mentioned measures while currently covered by the special law will be shifted into ordinary measures.

In short, 45 projects currently covered by the Law Regarding the Special Fiscal Measures of the Government for Regional Improvement Projects will be handled in three ways. While 15 projects will remain covered by a special but new law, 22 projects will be implemented as ordinary projects with certain financial subsidies. The rest will be shifted to ordinary projects.

As for education & enlightenment, and relief measures, the ruling coalition's Project Team met several times from the end of July to early August. They reached an agreement on August 7 on " the



promotion of education and enlightenment as well as the enhancement of relief measures for victims of human rights violations". This was submitted to Mr Seiroku Kajiyama, the Chief Secretary of the Cabinet.

The agreement urged the Cabinet to propose a necessary bill in the next Diet session in addition to setting up a council for fundamental solutions to Buraku discrimination, in order to embody the two subjects based on the opinion offered by the Consultative Council on Regional Improvement Measures on May 17, and the Program of Action for the UN Decade for Human Rights Education.

As a result, while the importance of seeking a fundamental solution for the Buraku problem was made clear, one more step forward was made for the enactment of education & enlightenment and relief measures.

Owing to the persistent campaign of the Buraku liberation movement, we

are able to get closer to the enactment of the clauses included in a bill for the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation (FLBL), drafted in 1985 by the Central Executive Committee to demand for Legislation of the FLBL.

While legislation for certain projects will be made clear, a declaration to stress the importance of a solution to Buraku discrimination will be included into a law. Education & enlightenment measures to eliminate the consciousness of discrimination and relief measures will be further discussed for legislation. The prospective law will create a council in order to fundamentally solve the Buraku problem.

We should continue our efforts for a possible law in line with the contexts of our FLBL as well as to strengthen the movement so that the law will be enacted at the coming Diet session (excerpt of the News Letter of the Buraku Liberation Research Institute in Japanese)

## *O-157 Poisoning-related Discriminatory Graffiti*

### *Found Inside a Restroom*

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"O-157 was generated from Buraku people, maggots, residing in the Awaji district. Therefore, kill all the Buraku people by dropping an atomic bomb on the Awaji district."

Late July, the above mentioned discriminatory graffiti, 19 centimeters by

40 centimeters, was found inside a men's rest room at Awaji station, located in Higashi Yodogawa Ward, Osaka City, on the Hankyu railway line. The incident was reported to the Branch of the Osaka Prefectural Federation of the Buraku Liberation League.



O-157 is a food poisoning caused by E-coli bacteria. The epidemic has already claimed 11 people and affected more than 9,000 nationwide in Japan since its outbreak in July.

The outbreak is especially serious in the city of Sakai, near Osaka City, where over 6,500 people have become ill, most of them schoolchildren.

Eating undercooked, contaminated ground beef has been said to be associated with the illness, but infection can also occur after drinking unpasteurized milk and after swimming in or drinking sewage-contaminated water. Person-to-person-contact is an important mode of transmission.

In connection with the graffiti, the

Branch distributed leaflets to people passing by the Awaji station on August 9, appealing the importance of peace and human rights.

Fifty-one years ago on August 9, an atomic bomb was dropped in Nagasaki, and nineteen years ago the appeal of Mr Ishikawa, who had been falsely charged with kidnapping-murder ( the Sayama case ), was dismissed by the supreme court.

The leaflets addressed the cruelty of war and the unjustness of false charges as well as denouncing the discriminatory graffiti at the station.

The branch criticized that the graffiti threatened not only Buraku people but also all the people since it agitated prejudice toward Buraku people by maliciously relating them to O-157 in addition to agitating dropping an atomic bomb, of which reference was very



*The Leaflets were Distributed*

*photo by the Branch*

horrible and against the international concern for eliminating nuclear weapons.

About four thousand leaflets were distributed in an hour by 30 members of the branch, including members of the children's group to commuters and shoppers.

Since the outbreak of O-157, discrimination and harassment against people who are not only infected but also live in places where a lot of people were infected and hospitalized have widely occurred.

Both the Osaka Prefectural and City governments started to take measures to tackle this problem in response to the request of the Osaka Federation of the BLL.

While the prefecture set up the Human Rights Task Force Committee Related to O-157 on August 7, the city organized the Project Team for Human Rights Enlightenment Related to O-157 on August 12. In addition, Sakai City government increased the number on the Human Rights Section.

Those organizations were designated to disseminate correct information and to enlighten people to prevent any prejudice



and discrimination as a result of O-157 as well as to gather information on human rights violations.

In the midst of the outbreak, many complaints were reported to government offices. Some workers were dismissed by their employers just because they lived in

Sakai city, where there were the biggest number of people infected. Tourists from Sakai city were refused hotel accommodations in another region where O-157 was not a serious problem.

### *A New Buraku List was Disclosed.*

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A list giving the locations of Buraku areas throughout Japan was recently found at a private firm located in Osaka. Academic information compiled by researchers working for a university in the past had been apparently leaked outside.

A spokesman for the Buraku Liberation League commented, "The list might have been used for the purpose of excluding Buraku people from employment and promotion opportunities. We are planning to investigate if the list was distributed to other parties."

The list, entitled the Nationwide Buraku Area Research, contains information on its publishing background. According to the description, it was originally published by the Central Harmonious Projects Association in 1936 and later reedited by two academics for research purposes. However, it does not indicate the year published.

♦ The list mentions the names, addresses, and numbers of Buraku areas

by prefecture, with major occupations engaged by the Buraku residents.

The list was handed over to Mr Kizu, a board member of the Osaka Prefecture Dowa Projects Association, by a private firm after its discovery in their company.

The so-called Buraku list was first disclosed in November 1975. The Buraku Liberation League started to denounce it as a discriminatory publication because it had been used to investigate family backgrounds in the recruitment of employees as well as marriage partners.

Nine such lists, 220 copies altogether, have been purchased so far by private firms, including leading companies. Mr Kizu, who has been investigating the existence of the Buraku Lists since the disclosure, said that this one might be considered the tenth Buraku List because it was already distributed to a private firm and that it might be one of the sources for other Buraku Lists.



*“Where are Buraku Areas ?”,  
Asked in the Computer Network.*

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An inquiry asking the locations of Buraku communities was transmitted into Nifty-Serve, a commercial computer network by a man in November 1995. The request is as follows:

“I saw many signboards related to Dowa and discrimination problems after we moved from Tokyo to the Osaka region. We lived in a government-built apartment complex in Osaka prefecture and now we live in Kyoto prefecture. Both complexes happen to be located in Buraku communities. We were allocated to an apartment complex in an area that has many vacant houses. The environment is so poor that we have had a hard time. We want to move to another place before our child enters elementary school. I would appreciate it if somebody could tell me information to distinguish Buraku areas and non-Buraku areas in the Osaka region.”

A member of the Osaka Prefectural Federation of the BLL happened to find the message and transmitted a message of protest to the writer. In response, the writer sent a derogatory message that his living area was flooded with refuse from houses and that he did not like events related to the Buraku liberation movement held near his place, asking if anybody else feels uneasy in such a place.

Although he transmitted again to be

excused for his message right after the first response, the BLL decided to investigate the background of the incident by talking to him.

According to the man, he once felt that he might have been discriminated against since he lived in a Buraku area. He had the experience of not being well treated when he went through the procedure to rent a parking lot. In addition, he said that he was afraid because Buraku people are united.

As for the abundant refuse, the fact is that there is a permanent dumping ground at the apartment complex to accommodate refuse from the tenants who are inclined to move out after a short time due to rent hikes.

The Osaka Prefectural Federation of the BLL continued to look into the background by holding a fact finding session attended by 70 of the BLL members in May 1996.

At the session, he confessed his prejudice that he considered the Buraku area a dirty and disgusting place. When asked how he became prejudiced, he answered that he was partly influenced by his fellow workers and boss at his company.

He wanted to leave the Buraku area for fear of being discriminated against like Buraku people. Then, he hit on the



idea to inquire about possible new places to live through a computer network. He believed this inquiry would not be noticed by Buraku people. He thought that they could not afford to join the

network.

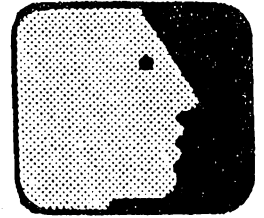
The BLL decided to enlighten people in his company as well as the man himself based on the findings at the session.





## *Buraku Problem Q & A (13)*

### Buddhism and discrimination



**Q** Is Buddhism free from Buraku discrimination ?

**A** There is a tradition that people carve a religious name for the dead on the face of a tomb as a sign of worship. That is a practice for many Buddhist religious organizations. The name for the dead is *Kaimyo*, posthumous. *Kaimyo* is given by a Buddhist priest and is recorded in a post-memorial-notebook at the temple the dead belonged to.

Of late, it was discovered that discriminatory names and characters in the notebooks and on the faces of tombs exist. Those were given by Buddhist priests to the dead who were of Buraku origins.

The names include the characters for beast, humble, ignoble, servant and many other kinds of derogatory expressions.

Upon the disclosure, Buddhist organizations started to widely investigate notebooks and tombs in response to the requests of the BLL. They found discriminatory *Kaimyo*, at many Buddhist sects in most parts of Japan. While the majority seem to have been given a long time ago, there are some names given even since the 1940's.

The fact suggests that Buddhist priests in the past did not treat Buraku people as a human beings not only in

their life time but also after death. The priests were instructed by their organizations what *Kaimyo* they should give to Buraku people.

In addition, temples located in Buraku communities were called "Impure Temples" and were not allowed to communicate with temples in non-Buraku areas. Buraku people were falsely urged to be patient to discrimination based on the doctrine of karma.

Even in recent years, some Buddhist temples gave information about the family backgrounds of their believers when anybody inquired in investigations for marriage, etc.

In spite of such facts, the Director-General of the Soto Sect of Buddhism made a speech at the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference on Religion and Peace, held in the USA, in 1979, stating that there was no longer Buraku discrimination in Japan and that there were some people clamoring for Buraku liberation even though neither the government nor people discriminate against Buraku people.

The statement was strongly criticized by groups struggling for the liberation, especially the BLL. In this reflection, the Solidarity Conference of Religious Group for the Solution of Dowa Problem was founded in 1981 consisting of 59 religious sects, joining hands with the BLL.