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Buraku Liberation News

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“Creating a New Era of the Struggle” —

The 53rd National Convention of the BLL



Mr Takumi Ueda, President of the BLL

photo by the Kaiho Shimbun

The Buraku Liberation League (BLL) held its 53rd National Convention in Tokyo from September 6-8 with the slogan “ We will create a new era of the third stage of our struggle (※ 1) succeeding to the will of the late Mr Uesugi, the former President.”

During the Convention, about one

thousand representatives from the various branches and prefectural federations of the BLL participated, new members of the Executive Committee were elected.(Please see No. 91, the previous issue)

At the end of the Convention, three resolutions and a declaration of the Convention, presented by Mr Takumi Ueda, the new President, were passed as policies of the struggle as follows.

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The resolutions ;

---- The BLL must win enactment of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation.

---- The BLL must win a complete victory in the struggle of the second retrial appeal for the Sayama case(※2).

---- The BLL must win a victory in the general election campaign (※3).

---- The BLL must strengthen the international solidarity for fighting against discrimination at local and community levels.

The declaration ;

At its 53rd National Convention, the BLL decided the policies aimed for a big progress this year by succeeding to the will of the late Mr Uesugi, the former President; i.e., that it must win an enactment of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation, a complete victory in the struggle of the second retrial appeal for the Sayama case and a victory in the general election campaign as well as decisively deploying the third stage of the Buraku liberation movement in unity of all the members of the BLL led by Mr Ueda, the New President.

We must tackle the following subjects.

----Our league must fight against any trend of gaining power of discrimination prompted by various kinds of social unrest and fight it out in order to let the Japanese government establish genuine policies for peace and human rights, as well as actively contribute to international efforts under the initiative

of the United Nations, including the restructure of the world order for human rights, peace and protection of the environment.

----We must fight in unity among the members of the BLL for an enactment of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation at the next Diet session. At the same time, we must do our best to bring about an administration which will genuinely tackle the Buraku problem by taking advantage of the positive aspect of the opinion offered by the Consultative Council on Regional Improvement Measures (on May 17,1996).

----We must reinforce the government's policy for eliminating a discriminatory conscience in society against Buraku people by strongly urging the national and local governments to thoroughly implement human rights education, in particular Dowa education.

----We must strive hard to win a victory in the second retrial appeal for the Sayama case while appealing to the public at large about the discriminatory nature and falseness of the case, with Mr Ishikawa at the head of the struggle.

----Each of the leaders, activists and staff of the BLL must try to reform and review their organizations to cope with new situations, not being content with the ways familiarized in the past many years.

----We must do our best in the next



general election campaign for the Lower House to support candidates, regardless of their political parties, who have a strong sense of anti-discrimination and human rights in order to bring about the political changes as to human rights, peace, democracy and environment.

---We must have thorough discussions among the members in order to revise our platform and regulations at the next National Convention to cope with the drastic changes of the local and international situations surrounding the Buraku liberation movement, and changes in reality of Buraku in addition to the new stage of the movement.

We confirmed the policies presented at the convention as mentioned above. It might not be easy for the new Central Executive Committee, headed by President Ueda, to lead the Buraku liberation movement. The BLL is expected more and more to facilitate the enhancement of a human rights policy in Japan while the situation surrounding the Buraku liberation movement has been drastically changing.

We, therefore, declare that we will succeed and develop the Buraku liberation movement that has more than 70 years of history since the establishment of the Levelers' Association. In addition, we will deploy a decisive movement in the new era, striving for a complete liberation from Buraku discrimination; i.e., elimination of all forms of discrimination from both Japan and the rest of the world.

We, hereby, declare.

September 8, 1996

The 53rd National Convention of the
Buraku Liberation League



Bicycle demonstration for the Sayama Case

photo by the Kaiho Shimbun

Editor's note ;

(※1) the third stage : The BLL refers to the current stage of the movement as the third stage which began in 1988. In this stage, the BLL seeks to succeed and develop the gains of the movement in the past, in addition to strengthening the movement for eliminating discrimination from Japan and the rest of the world.

The first stage was from 1922, the year that the Levelers' Association was founded, up to 1942, the time of World War II.

The second stage started after the war. During this period, the BLL focused on demanding that the national and local governments take responsibility for eliminating discrimination, such as implementing various projects to improve the situation of the Buraku people.

(※2) the Sayama case : Mr Kazuo



Ishikawa was falsely arrested and charged in 1963 on kidnap-murder, and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1974 by the Tokyo High Court. An appeal to the supreme court and a subsequent retrial appeal to the high court were dismissed despite a lot of evidence for his innocence presented by his lawyers. The second retrial appeal was filed in 1986.

On the other hand, Mr Ishikawa was given a conditional release from prison in

1994 after imprisonment for 31 years. However, the guilty verdict remains unchanged. This case was based on Buraku discrimination at its root.

(※3) the general election : Mr Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Prime Minister, on September 27 dissolved the Lower House and set October 20, 1996 as the date for general elections for 500 seats.

*Mr Ryu Matsumoto and Mr Takashi Tanihata
were Elected to the Diet.*



Mr Matsumoto



Mr Tanihata

Mr Ryu Matsumoto and Mr Takashi Tanihata, who have been actively carrying the policy for the elimination of Buraku Discrimination as well as the enhancement of human rights, won in the Lower House election held on October 20. The BLL actively supported them during the election campaign.

Mr Matsumoto, the Democratic Party of Japan, a newly formed party mainly by the members of the Social Democratic Party (former Socialist Party of Japan) and the New Party Sakigake, was reelected. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the BLL.

Mr Tanihata, the Liberal Democratic Party, was a former member of the Upper House.

This was the first general election under the new electoral system, in three years of coalition government ; the LDP, the SDP, and the Sakigake. Political realignment will be brought about.



Discriminatory Remark was Made

by an Assistant University Professor.

Mr N, an assistant professor of University, a private university located in Osaka Prefecture, made a discriminatory remark at a training session in August 1995 designated for local government employees of Nara Prefecture.

In his lecture, he said, "One of my students who is working for a local government office in charge of public works told me about the difficulty of his duties. According to him, there are three kinds of masters who bring trouble to the office: politicians, Yakuza (gangsters) and people from Dowa areas. He laments that he is no longer able to have a conversation with these visitors when shouted at by them without being given a chance to explain."

In reaction, the Osaka and Nara Prefectural Federations of BLL jointly held fact-finding sessions in January and March 1996 attended by N. At the two sessions the BLL questioned him as to why he related the public works office incident about "three masters"; how problematic he thought "the three masters" were; and, if he considered *Buraku people to be members of Yakuza organizations.

N answered that he had not

understood the Buraku issue well, as he had had lived in the Northeast District of Japan and in the Tokyo District (where there are fewer Buraku areas compared to the Osaka District) for many years.

He said that he simply associated Buraku people with members of fake organizations on the Dowa only hunting for concessions on Dowa projects.

As he didn't sincerely recognize his discriminatory consciousness by vaguely explaining his ideas, the BLL members who attended the sessions continued to question him.

As a result, he confessed that he had made discriminatory remarks twice in his lectures at the University seven or eight years before.

Denunciation Session

On August 6, 1996, the Osaka and Nara Prefectural Federations of the BLL held a first denunciation session on the discriminatory remark of assistant professor N, participated in by 16 of members of the Human Rights Education Promotion Committee of University along with 200 members from the BLL.



He first emphasized that he did not intentionally make a discriminatory remark but meant it as a joke. When questioned about similar remarks in the past, he confessed that he came to embrace a negative image about Buraku areas, such as considering those areas as terrible places with frequent violent incidents, after he transferred to the Osaka District.

According to him, upon his assignment he was instructed by the then dean of the School of Law, his superior, not to carelessly talk about the Buraku problem without enough understanding of it, and not to use discriminatory words in order not to be pointed out and blamed by someone.

The members of the Human Rights Education Promotion Committee of the university admitted that they neglected to inspect the guidance on the issue for newly assigned lecturers under the principle of school autonomy. They disclosed that the university authorities neither initiated the investigation of the incident nor enlightened him. Such facts proved that while the university administration had a discriminatory character, the committee had not been functioning as a human rights educational body.

The BLL decided to continue tackling this incident because of the absence of human rights education of the university.

University, with more than 30,000 students enrolled, is one of the major and historic universities in the

Osaka District.

A discriminatory postcard was sent to the Nara Federation.

Shortly after the denunciation session, an anonymous postcard slandering the BLL was sent to the Nara Prefectural Federation. The postcard which was delivered on August 17 was extremely discriminatory.

It states, "I heard that you, the BLL, denounced an assistant professor of University. (omission) It is true that there are three kinds of terrible masters: politicians, the Yakuza, and people from Dowa areas. Although a right to denounce other people is not authorized, you unilaterally denounce others with self-righteous justice as if holding a kangaroo court. All of us are afraid of you."

The writer concludes as if the BLL is indulging in hunting for concessions as well as corruption just like a fake Dowa organization. The BLL, filled with desire for material gain, will not only destroy democracy in Japan but also hopeful prospects for the future, the writer claims.

It also says, "If you were in the USA, all of you could have been already killed by the Ku Klux Klan", "You are dirty beasts."

The postcard bears an Osaka Central Post-mark dated August 16, 1996.



An Estate Agent Tried to Get Information about Buraku Area at a Public Office.



Fact-Finding Session with the Estate Agent

photo by the BLL Tokyo

The Tokyo Prefectural Federation of the BLL held four rounds of fact-finding sessions from January to July over a discriminatory inquiry of a real estate company.

Mr B, an employee of Kensetsu, one of the leading estate agents, visited the Dowa Measures Section, Katsushika Ward Office, Tokyo, in October 1995 to inquire if land which they planned to buy for the construction of condominiums was inside a Buraku area.

At a series of the fact-finding sessions and the denunciation session, B confessed that he had a conversation with an official of the Dowa Measures Section as follows.

♥ B said, " Can I know in this office where Dowa areas are ? " An official

responded, " Can you tell me why you are asking about it ? " " I want to know in order to avoid any possible trouble in our housing project ", B answered.

B was prejudiced that it might be problematic to be involved in a Dowa-related issue after he had heard about the trouble of another estate agent with a neighborhood in a Buraku area. He also thought that they should quickly obtain the building permit and smoothly go on with the project without any trouble in order to make enough profit at a time when the selling prices of condominiums tended to fall.

On the other hand, the company staff disclosed at the session that they found a lot of reports and rumors which could lead to discriminatory incidents when they gathered information by questionnaire about the Buraku issue from its employees who number over one thousand.

While they have branch offices, including ones in Osaka, Hiroshima, Fukuoka, along with the Tokyo Head Office, they have one staff nominally assigned as a " Training Promoter on the Dowa Problem " who never organized a training seminar in the past.

According to the BLL, they will

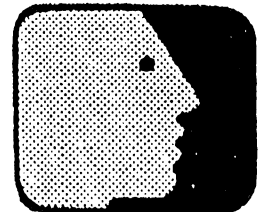


continue to criticize the company to get them to change their policy which is now totally indifferent to the Buraku problem. The company is listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange.

This kind of incident is not an isolated case. Several estate agents conducted similar inquiries in the past.



Buraku Problem Q & A (14)



“ Don't-wake-up-a-sleeping-baby ”

Q It is impossible to distinguish Buraku people by appearance because they belong to the same ethnic group as non-Buraku Japanese. Therefore don't you agree to my idea that Buraku discrimination will go away only if we don't make a fuss about it ?

A That is a so-called concept of “Don't-wake-up-a-sleeping-baby ” which some people believe. You may think that as far as we do not know about the Buraku at all, we will neither talk about the Buraku nor discriminate against Buraku people.



In reality, there are people who disclose the family background of others and who want to know it. In addition, detective agencies are engaged in investigating it as a business to give customers information in preparation for marriage and job recruitment. Ten kinds of Buraku lists that give the locations of nationwide Buraku areas have been found so far.

As indicated in such instances, it is not realistic to follow the concept of “ Don't-wake-up-a-sleeping-baby ” to eliminate Buraku discrimination. The idea only negates the need to correctly teach about the issue.

Anyhow people know the existence of Buraku people. In many cases, people in their early years are first impressed by the prejudice of others close to them, such as parents and friends, who often say that Buraku areas are dirty and that Buraku people are horrifying.

In such ways they grow up with false understandings about the Buraku. When they later face Buraku people in marriage, etc, “ a sleeping baby ”, discrimination consciousness, will raise its head.

It is important, therefore, for everybody to be correctly taught about the Buraku problem without having the reality covered over. If we leave “a sleeping baby” as he/she is, prejudice and false understanding will be taught for generations and Buraku discrimination will be continuously reproduced.

* On the other hand, there are also some Buraku people who seemingly support the concept of “ Don't-wake-up-a-

sleeping-baby ”. Those people choose to keep silent in fear of facing further discrimination since they have been seriously discriminated against in society.

They would not tell their children that they are of Buraku origin probably based on the idea that they won't have their children suffer from the same hardship as they, even though they are strongly angry about the injustice.

Judging from those facts, it is wrong for non-Buraku people to insist that even Buraku people insist “not to wake up a sleeping baby.”

If you say that just by keeping quiet, discrimination will go away, you are just telling them to be patient with discrimination.

While we have to try to understand the background of why some Buraku people keep silent, we should respect the rights of Buraku people who raise their voices denouncing discrimination and appeal for Buraku liberation.

All the people, including non-Buraku people, should tackle the issue.

(reference; “Dowa Education” published by the Buraku Liberation Research Institute in 1995)

To our readers,

Buraku Liberation News would like to seek your opinions in order to provide you with more useful information.

Please fill out the Questionnaire attached and return it to us by mail, fax ,or E-mail by January 31,1997.