

March 1986

The 3rd Central Meeting for the Establishment of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation

A national meeting was held in Tokyo on Jan. 27 to request the establishment of a Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation. Among the 1,500 participants from various fields were representatives from the Socialist Party, the Komeito (Clean Government Party) and the Democratic-Socialist Party, and from companies, religious groups, administrative bodies and labor unions. These distinguished guests appealed for the need to establish the law.

A summary of the Keynote speech follows:

- (1) We need to request the establishment of the law in the strongest possible terms during the current session of the Diet, due to last until the end of May, since the present interim law will no longer be in effect after the end of this year.
- (2) As the 1986 budget shows, the government is trying to implement policies which ignore the life of the people. This becomes clear when we look at the restrictions and cuts in the budgets for welfare, education and agriculture, the rise in public utility rates, such as the cost of travel on Japanese National Railways, the hike in the price of rice, and the large increase in defense expenditure (approximately 6.6 percent up on last year).
- (3) Despite the fact that this is the last year of the present law, the Dowa budget saw a very minor increase of 1.8 percent (214.5 billion yen). More than 90 percent of that budget has been allocated to projects for improving the environment, such as the construction of housing, schools, meeting houses and local roads. The budget set aside for securing jobs and education and the budget for enlightenment, which is necessary to promote true public understanding,

are not yet satisfactory.

(4) We need to accelerate our movement for the establishment of the law by further building up public support. As of Jan. 10 of this year, we had been given official support from 18 prefectures, 990 local governments, 2,600,000 signatures from private citizens, and 83 signatures from university presidents. We have also started collecting signatures from Diet members.

(5) The most important task is to make them learn the true reality of discrimination against Buraku. One effective means of doing this is to make use of the photo-journal, "Inochi, Ai, Jinken," which introduces recent cases of discrimination revealed in marriage, employment and derogatory graffiti, and the book, "Discrimination Against Buraku Today," which incorporates the results of a nationwide survey of discrimination against Buraku and public awareness of the problem.

After the meeting, the participants requested signatures from the Diet members and asked them to negotiate with the authorities concerned over the issue.

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Actual Conditions in Buraku Communities (1)

In 1986 the Buraku Liberation Research Institute published a book called "A Charted Survey of Buraku Discrimination Today," which is based on findings from surveys conducted in various parts of Japan.

The findings are set out under the following

(1) Health and Life

(a) Sickly people — twice the average

The proportion of "sickly people" as revealed in the survey of Burakumin health (under the categories "rather weak," "sickly," "going to hospital regularly," "hospitalized" and "bedridden") is 23.2 percent, nearly double the national average figure of 12.6 percent (Health and Welfare Ministry, 1983).

A prefectural breakdown shows figures of 40.2 percent (Hiroshima), 30.5 percent (Kagawa), 23.9 percent (Osaka), 22 percent (Tochigi), 14.6 percent (Kagoshima) and 13.3 percent (Kyoto).

All these figures are higher than the national average. The figures are also higher for women than for men.

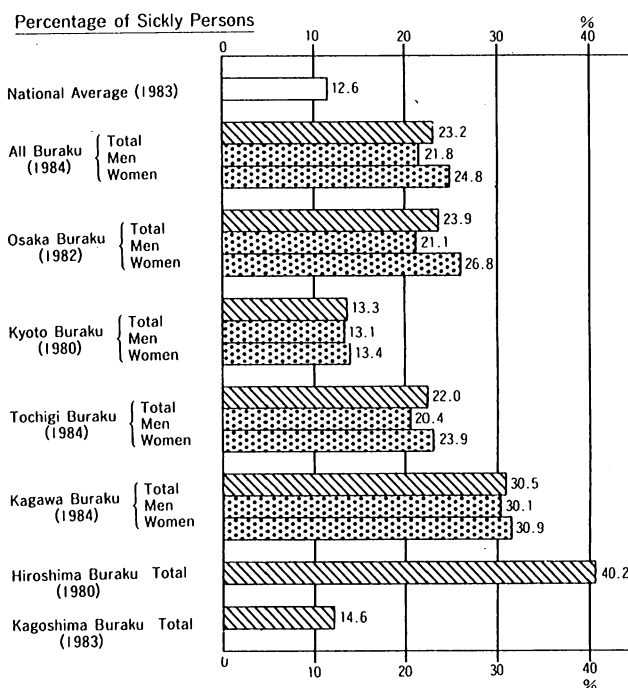
(b) Lumbago, shoulder pain, gastroenteritis common

The five most common diseases among Burakumin are the same as those among the general population: high blood pressure, lumbago and shoulder pain, gastroenteritis, heart disease and respiratory disorder.

However, there is a significant difference in frequency. High blood pressure is the third most common disease among Burakumin whereas it ranks first among the general population. Conversely, lumbago and shoulder pain, which is the most common disorder among Burakumin, ranks third among the general population. Gastroenteritis comes second in the case of Burakumin but fourth in

headings: Health and Life; Work; Industry; Agriculture; Education; Elderly and Disabled People; Experiences of Discrimination; Discrimination in Marriage; Awareness of General Public.

Beginning with this issue, BL News will discuss these findings in a series of installments.



the case of the general population.

The same pattern can be seen in the figures for individual prefectures. The general implication is that the various physical disorders evident among Burakumin have been caused by hard physical labor in unstable conditions.

(c) 40% lower annual income and monthly living expenses

The average household income per annum is 4.129 million yen for the general population, com-

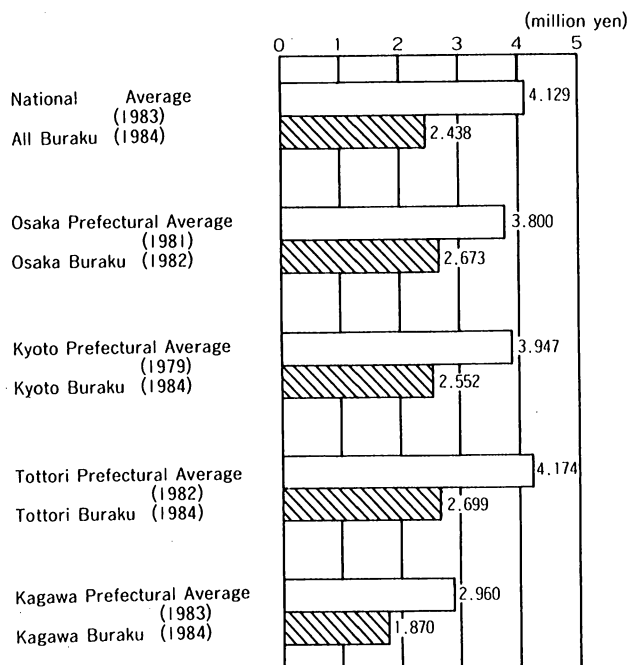


pared with 2.438 million yen (60 percent of the national average) for Buraku — that is, a difference of 1.691 million yen. The disparity is over 1 million yen in the case of every individual prefecture surveyed.

Average monthly living expenses are 275,000 yen for the general population, compared with 156,000 yen for Buraku — in other words, a difference of 119,000 yen.

This means that both the income and expenditure indices for Burakumin households are nearly 40 percent lower than the national average.

Average Annual Household Income



(d) Proportion of Households on Relief

— 8 times higher in Buraku —

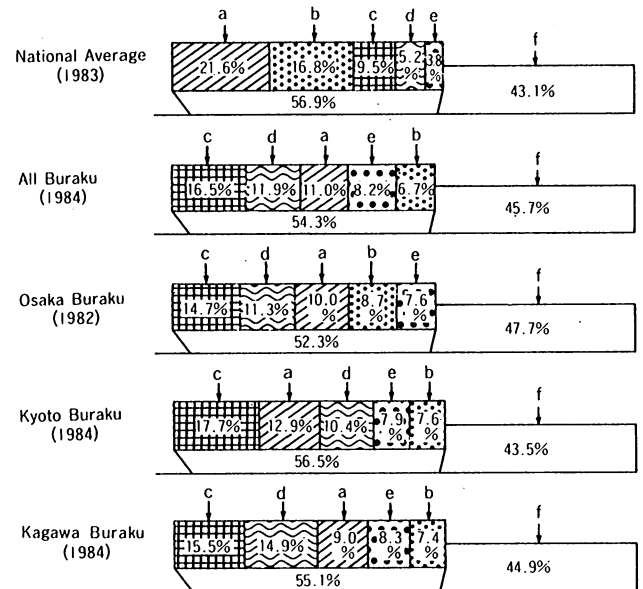
The proportion of households receiving relief allowances is 1.23 percent among the general population, compared with 9.75 percent for Buraku.

In Kagawa prefecture, the figure for Buraku rises as high as 25.1 percent, roughly 20 times the national average.

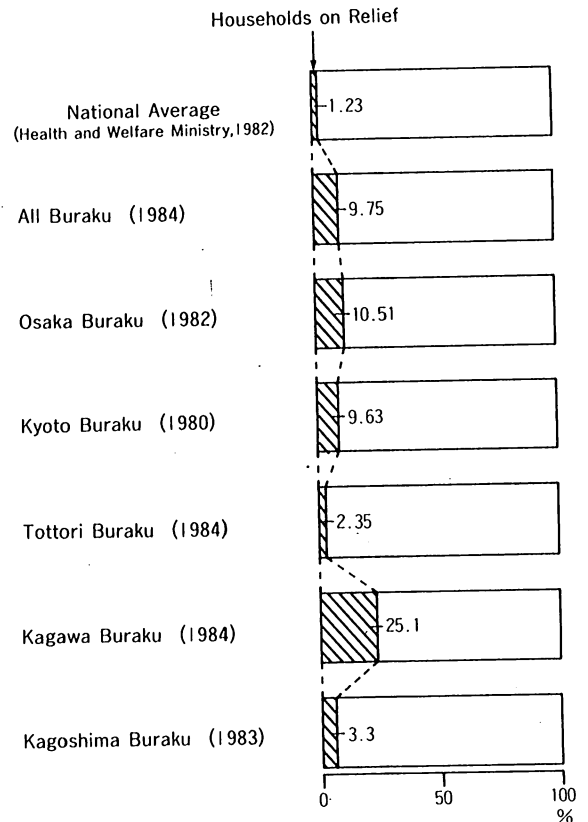
For Buraku communities in other prefectures, the figures are 10.51 percent (Osaka), 9.63 percent (Kyoto), 3.3 percent (Kagoshima) and 2.35 percent (Tottori), all well in excess of the national average.

Breakdown figures for diseases

- a high blood pressure
- b respiratory disorder
- c lumbago and shoulder pain
- d gastroenteritis
- e cardiopathy
- f others



Percentage of Households on Relief





Conspicuous Discrimination in Employment

“Reject Koreans and Buraku people”

Some progress has been made in the attempt to reform the discriminatory attitude of companies and corporations through our enlightenment movement since the publication of discriminatory “Buraku lists” emerged as a serious social problem in 1975.

Last year, however, another case of discrimina-

tion in employment was revealed in Osaka, a place where we believed enlightenment had been most successfully pursued. We have to monitor the activities of employers and the administrative authorities concerned.

Summary of the Incident

In February 1985, a teacher at a high school in Osaka, who served as a students’ counselor, visited a candy wholesaler called “ Corporation,” to apply for a job. While answering the questions of the teacher concerning the employment of Korean students, a representative of the company said without hesitation: “We don’t hire applicants of foreign nationality or of Buraku origin as a principle since we have to take into account the image of our

company in the market.” He wouldn’t hear of a request from the teacher that the company reform its attitude.

Although the incident occurred in February, it was not disclosed to the public until summer, because the teachers at the high school feared that if it surfaced, the case would have adverse consequences for the school.

Petition Filed to Prohibit Discriminatory Leaflets

On Dec. 25, 1985, the Fukuoka Prefectural Federation of the Buraku Liberation League filed a provisional disposition with the Fukuoka District Court to prevent printing and distributing leaflets containing discriminatory statements.

bought a secondhand house in Fukuoka in 1977 and found out the following year that it was located in a Buraku area. He first complained to the estate agent and then began to distribute leaflets with the following contents around 1983: “I was shocked to find out that I had bought a house in a Buraku ...”; “I would never have

bought it if I had known the truth ...”; “The agent should have told the buyer the truth ...”; “The agent made a profit by deceiving the buyers about this fact...”; “I don’t want to live in a Buraku...”; “I have been made a victim because there is no guarantee that I can live in a Buraku without suffering from discrimination in every aspect of life, since the Japanese people are generally prejudiced against the Buraku...”

His statements leave the reader with the clear impression that the Buraku is not a place for people to live and serve to worsen popular prejudice. In short, he didn’t want to be mistaken for a



Burakumin.

distributed these discriminatory leaflets -- nearly 50,000 in all -- around apartment complexes in Fukuoka. The Tokyo metropolitan government (was still registered as a citizen of Tokyo), the Fukuoka Legal Affairs Bureau and the Fukuoka City government discussed the matter with on at least 23 separate occasions, but he didn't show any remorse at all.

After all this proved to be futile, a petition was finally filed. It cites the following: (1) the infliction of mental distress which is incapable of compensation; (2) 's insensitivity to his problematic purchase of a house in a Buraku at a price lower than the market value; (3) the violation of civil rights through mass distribution of discriminatory leaflets; and (4) his antagonism toward educational and enlightenment activities.

Buraku Liberation Researchers' Conference VIII

The 8th Buraku Liberation Researchers' Conference was held on Feb. 15-16, with 180 participants. The activities of BLRI over the last year were reported and the direction of research for the following year was discussed.

On the afternoon of the first day, the opening address by S. Murakoshi, director general of BLRI, was followed by guest speeches from the BLL headquarters, the Osaka prefectural office and the Osaka municipal office.

The first report was given by K. Tomonaga, secretary general of BLRI, on the theme of "Elimination of discrimination in foreign countries and

Japan." It was a comparative survey of the way the legal system provides for the elimination of discrimination in the following countries: the USA (the Constitution, the Civil Rights Act, "affirmative action"), Britain (the Race Relations Acts), West Germany (Articles 130 and 131 of the Criminal code), France (the 1972 Prohibitive Law on Racial Discrimination), India (the Constitution, the Civil Rights Protection Law) and Japan. Tomonaga emphasized that the Japanese legal system was quite inadequate in this area.

The general meeting of the 8th Buraku Liberation Researchers' Conference





Next, M. Ohga, chief of the research section of BLRI, delivered a report under the theme, "A study of the objections to the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation based on the 'national merger theory'."

The Japanese Communist Party has put forward a "national merger theory," which asserts that discrimination against Buraku has been diminishing since the end of the Pacific War, when the Japanese emperor system and the landlord structure, which constituted the concrete bases of discrimination, were broken up. From this standpoint, they argue that the Fundamental Law is no longer necessary.

Ohga contended that the viewpoint of the Japanese Communist Party was incorrect because they ignored the very real fact that discrimination was still being practised in many forms in Japanese society. He went on to say that the JCP standpoint was the same as that of the present government, and even served to support their policy of increasing the military budget while cutting the welfare budget.

In the evening session of the conference, a section meeting was held, divided into four groups specializing in enlightenment, law and administra-

tion, education, and history and theory.

On the second day, these four sections exchanged reports of their respective discussions and Ohga wound up the conference with the following summary.

(1) We need to promote further the movement for enlightenment and education. To do so, we should face the real facts of discrimination in public places or schools, expand cultural activities on this issue, and also request the participants in the conference to learn about this issue for themselves in their social lives.

(2) The present government has been trying to cut the entire budget for social welfare. In these circumstances, we should make clear the significance and role of a Dowa policy which will bring about the development of a democratic policy as a whole and establish a theoretical framework for the improvement of the living standards of all of society.

(3) We should criticize the objections to the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation and appeal to the public that it is necessary and will contribute to a more democratic society.

True History of Buraku (part 3)

By Professor Nobuaki Teraki
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Features of the Modern Status System

In medieval Japan, the structure of the status hierarchy was complex and status distinctions were not rigidly fixed.

The modern status system, however, applied across the nation. Almost all the 300 feudal domains under the sway of the Shogunate were organized in a "samurai-farmer-artisan-merchant-'eta'-'hinin' (non-human)" pyramid. The regulations governing status were legally binding.

The most important feature of the system was

that certain occupations were attached to each status. The samurai saw to administrative, military and judicial affairs. The farmers, of course, were engaged in agriculture, the artisans in various crafts, and the merchants in commerce. Among the tasks done by the "hinin" appear to have been beggars.

In addition, each status was assigned a different duty: samurai-military service; farmers-tax payment and other services; townspeople (artisans and



merchants)--guarding the town; "eta" --execution and policing; and "hinin" --menial policing functions.

Structure of the Modern Status System

"Samurai--farmer--artisan--merchant--'eta'--'hinin' goes the order. However, artisans and merchants were both townspeople and were often treated in a similar way. Townspeople and farmers received similar treatment at tribunals. Neither class enjoyed any special advantage over the other when it came to the verdict.

So the status hierarchy may be more accurately schematized as follows:

Let me illustrate this schema by citing an example from Osaka. An old map of the city shows the distribution of residential areas. Merchants and ar-

It is noteworthy that even the samurai, the ruling class, had to fulfil certain obligations.

tisans lived in the same neighborhoods. The samurai kept to themselves. The farmers lived in villages on the city outskirts.

A record of occupations in one of the districts in the early Meiji period (around 1872) also demonstrates the extent to which the lives of the merchants and artisans were integrated.

This evidence suggests that there was no clear hierarchical distinction between merchants and artisans: they lived together and intermarriage was common.

Relationship between Status and Residence

Prof. Kiyoshi Inoue, a leading Japanese historian, argued that Eta status in the Edo era was characterized by a threefold restriction imposed on it in respect of status, occupation and residence.

I can't really agree with him. It is true that residential segregation was governed by one's politically designated status or caste in most cases.

However, there were numerous exceptions. For instance, more than half the urban population were

farmers of peasants who were engaged in agriculture on the outskirts of the towns. They were not, of course, classified as "townspeople," another caste category, but as "farmers/peasants." Samurai, to take another example, didn't always live in castle towns. Some of them lived in farming villages.

Variations of this kind existed in the restrictive "fourclass" caste system.

"Lowly People" (senmin)

"Lowly" was a category imposed by the regime and not chosen by the people subject to discrimination. It means "of little" value as opposed to "nobleness," which was considered to be an inherent characteristic of the "nobility." It is my contention that the derogatory adjective "lowly" should be replaced by "hisabetsu" ("subject to discrimination.")

It is very difficult to give a precise definition of "Hisabetsu Buraku" "Buraku subject to discrimination." We know that the Levelers' movement was

established by people formerly known as Eta. Recently, however, people of a different outcaste origin are joining the liberation movement — in Hiroshima, for example. In Toyama too, there are Buraku consisting of people of still another outcaste origin.

We should remember that outcastes did not comprise only Eta and Hinin; a variety of classifications existed under the Edo caste system. But here I will limit my analysis to Burakumin of Eta origin.