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Area Improvement Measures Council Should Meet Immediately With Buraku Participation

The current Area Improvement Measures Law will expire in March 1992. However, by no means can we expect that a fundamental solution to Buraku issues will be achieved by this law alone. The enactment of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation is called for in this context. The Area Improvement Measures Council, an advisory organ attached to the Coordination and Management Agency and in charge of conducting deliberations on Buraku issues, needs to appoint new members immediately in order to reopen the deliberations because the term of Council members has already expired.

The government agency has not agreed to include representatives of Buraku organizations on the Council on the pretext that conflicts and differences of opinion among Buraku organizations prevent constructive discussions. On the occasion of recent negotiations with the Coordination and Management Agency held on July 11, this problem was raised but no clear response from the agency was heard.

We are determined not to allow the exclusion of representatives of interested parties, namely Buraku representatives, in the management of the Council. We would like to get support and cooperation from various organizations and individuals so that fair Council management will be realized.

Dietmen belong to Socialist Party of Japan visited to Management and Coordination Agency for Buraku participation in Improvement Measures Council.



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Memorial Service For Mr. Wajima, A Lawyer Who Passed Away On May 13, 1990

Mr. Iwakichi Wajima, born in a Buraku area, was a victim of discrimination. He studied very hard, supporting himself and eventually became a lawyer in 1931. Since that time he dedicated himself to the people on the bottom of society. In 1945, after the Second World War he established the Youth Department of the Buraku Liberation League in Osaka. He became a chairman, working for the Buraku liberation movement. He also participated in the defense team for the Sayama case, passionately making great efforts for those who had been falsely accused. In 1973 he was elected chairman of the Japan Lawyers' Association and took a great interest in reforming the judicial system.

He passed away on May 13, 1990 and on July 19, 1990 in Naniwa Liberation Hall his memorial service was held under the auspices of a memorial service executive committee, consisting of 14 groups, including BLL Headquarters and BLL Osaka Federation, with whom Mr. Wajima worked. About 1200 people from various fields gathered at the memorial service to mourn Mr. Wajima and promising to continue his work.

On behalf of the executive committee, Mr. Uesugi,



President of BLL spoke to Mr. Wajima's picture, saying, "My Dear Colleague, Mr. Wajima!" and promised, in front of those assembled, to work toward achieving the following; the establishment of human rights; the materialization of social justice; the retrial of the Sayama case; an eradication of accusation; the development of the right of denunciation; the registration of the "Fundamental Law of Buraku Liberation"; and the International Levelers' Movement. These were all goals toward which Mr. Wajima labored throughout his life.

Symposium On Law And Minorities In Japan

The Buraku Liberation Research Institute organized a symposium entitled 'Legal Provisions and Elimination of Discrimination against Minorities in Japan' on July 14.

The symposium was opened by Coordinator

Masumi Takano, professor of Kagawa University, who said "The need to eliminate discrimination against various minorities in Japan and to establish legal provisions for minorities invites much attention these days. Discriminated-against populations have



a number of common features among them, as well as unique individual histories and issues. We would like to stimulate active discussion with those who have proposed concrete blueprints of legal frameworks to eliminate discrimination in order to deepen our exchanges."

This was followed by a remark by Mr. Kenzo Tomonaga, secretary-general of the BLRI, addressing several reasons why the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation is necessary. He mentioned the following: 1) A significant gap between Buraku and the national average in actual work conditions and educational achievement; 2) A lack of awareness-raising activities as indicated by the repeated incidence of discrimination and a lack of laws and regulations against employment discrimination; 3) the ineffectiveness of the current Special Financial Measures Law for Area Improvement to solve these problems; and 4) the need to improve domestic legislation to meet the standards of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and other international conventions that Japan has not yet ratified. Mr. Tomonaga also pointed out that the scheme of the Fundamental Law on Human Rights should be drafted based on mutual understanding and agreement between various minority organizations, also taking into consideration the contents of the 'Bill Concerning the Ainu Race' and the 'Bill on Human Rights Assurance and Postwar Compensation for Foreign Residents in Japan Originating from Former Colonies of Japan'.

Mr. Hideaki Uemura, representative of the Center for Civic Diplomacy, next reported on the 'Bill Concerning the Ainu Race'. This bill is truly epoch-making in that it calls for the abolition of a discriminatory law of a symbolic kind, the Hokkaido Former Primitives Protection Law, and the bill was drafted by Ainu people themselves. The movement towards the enactment of the Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation has allegedly affected this call for the new law for the Ainu. In May 1988, a private consultative organ of the Governor of Hokkaido Prefecture, Hokkaido Utari Issue Discussion Group, adopted a resolution calling for the enactment of the new law. This resolution, however, rejected the need to set up designated Council seats for the Ainu and showed some limited understanding about the importance to promote industrial activities and education. At the government level, only closed study meetings are held and no other activities are in evidence. The United

Nations is now drafting the 'World Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' which is to be finalized in 1992. This declaration could have a significant impact on the future development of the new law. Mr. Uemura called attention to the international concept of the 'rights of indigenous peoples'.

Mr. Yang Teho, representative of the Liaison Council Against Ethnic Discrimination, pointed out 1) that the postwar disposition or the issues of Koreans in Japan has yet to be done, as indicated by what are called 'the year 1991 issues'; 2) that rigid institutions and a consciousness of discrimination are exemplified by forced evacuation, a nationality clause which prohibits the employment of Koreans and other foreigners as school teachers and civil servants, a refusal to officially sanction ethnic studies, etc.; 3) that no postwar compensations have been provided despite the apologies expressed by the former and current emperors; and 4) that there is a lack of perspective to assure basic rights for foreigners who have settled in Japan. It was stated also that the 'Law on Postwar Compensation and Human Rights Assurance', which covers rights to participate in local governments, was needed.

An active exchange of opinions followed these three presentations and the meeting was closed with an agreement to continue the discussions further.

• Buraku Problem in Japan — Buraku Liberation News No1~50 (1981~89)

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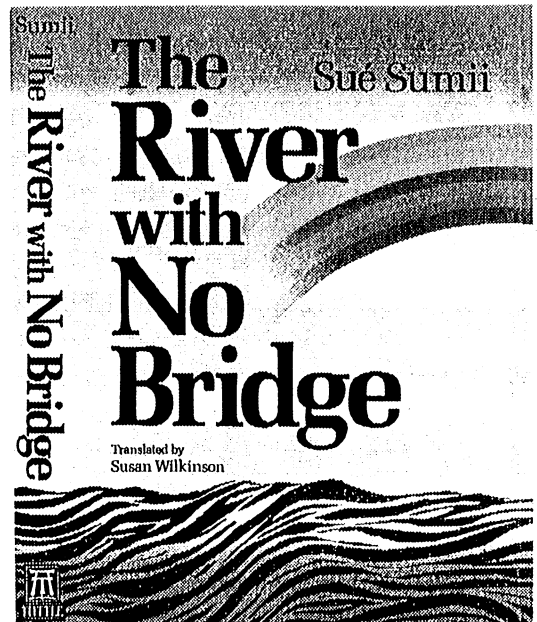
English Version Of "The River With No Bridge" Vol. 1 Published.

On March 3, 1992, The National Levellers' Association (A forerunner of the Buraku Liberation League) will celebrate the 70th anniversary of its foundation. In commemoration BLL will make "The River With no Bridge" written by Ms. Sue Sumii into a movie. This book has recently been translated into English by Susan Wilkinson (Tuttle. ¥2,780.-) as if coincides with the above anniversary. The following is an extraction from the book's introduction and a brief outline of Ms. Sumii's career :

The River with No Bridge is a courageous work that explores with outspoken frankness a subject still taboo in Japan—the intolerance and bigotry faced daily by Japan's largest minority group, the *burakumin*. Racially no different from other Japanese, over the centuries the *burakumin* have been cruelly ostracized for their association with occupations considered defiling.

Spanning the years 1908 to 1924, the original six volumes of this novel trace the developing awareness of *burakumin* of their rights and dignity as human beings. Volume one, translated here into English for the first time, tells of young Koji Hatanaka's questioning of the rigid social order. His sense of injustice grows because of the prejudice he meets not only from other children at school—who will not even use the same water bucket for fear of contamination—but also from his teachers—for whom it is as natural to despise the lowest in society as it is to worship the highest, and who therefore try to instill in him their belief that since he was born defiled he should resign himself to his fate.

The story of one family's battle against bigotry, *The River with No Bridge* is told against the backdrop of Japan's struggle to shed its feudalistic past and enter the modern age. The only fictional work of its magnitude to address the problem of prejudice in Japan, this work exposes for the first time the darker



side of the Japanese—who pride themselves on their homogeneity and group spirit, while at the same time discriminating ruthlessly against three million of their own. However, the insight it gives the reader into what it feels like to be the target of irrational prejudice has relevance that transcends national borders. The novel is also a unique social record of a traditional rural way of life, over which the sinister shadow of State control was beginning to fall, as Japan moved relentlessly into the modern age.

Sue Sumii was born in 1902 in Nara prefecture, near the village described in *The River With No Bridge*. Outraged by the discrimination she witnessed against the *burakumin*, she came to challenge the widely accepted belief that those who are disadvantaged are destined to remain so. Her first novel appeared in 1921; she later published many collections of short stories that were broadcast over NHK radio. In 1959, she began her major work, *Hashi no nai kawa* [The River with No Bridge], which was published during the years 1961-73 in six volumes. Together, they have sold over four million copies and have been made into a Japanese feature film.

About 185,000 Viewed The Exhibit

Human Rights Panel Exhibit On The Premises Of Japan Railroad, Tokyo Station

In order to present the actual conditions of Buraku discrimination as well as concrete discriminatory cases, a panel exhibition was held from July 10 to 12 in Tokyo station yard, with the theme "Life, Love and Buraku Discrimination Now". The exhibit was sponsored by an executive committee of the National Movement for Fundamental Law of Buraku Liberation, and JR-East Japan supported the event.

The exhibit consisted of 60 panels, photographs taken by Mr. Masafumi Yamamoto. All the panels

reflected the life of Buraku people, the actual conditions of Buraku areas throughout Japan, and they showed discriminatory graffiti and discriminatory personal computer correspondence. All day long passengers getting on and off trains stopped to view the panels.

The executive committee is planning to hold similar exhibits on the premises of Nagoya, Osaka, Hiroshima and Fukuoka railroad stations. At the opening ceremony Mr. Kohshin Ohtani, chairman of



Jyodoshinshu Buddhism), the Takyo station master, and Mr. Uesugi (President of BLL) cut the tape. Mr. Uesugi stated that once people are informed about the Buraku problem in Japan they will become interested

in all forms of human rights, thus awakening their understanding regarding human equality. He appealed for cooperation and support to reach that goal.

A Counter-argument to the Report Submitted by Japan under the Int'l Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (12)

Article 25

(1) voting right equity

Due to the population concentration in cities, the weight of a city dweller's vote is significantly lighter than that of a rural inhabitant. The Supreme Court judged in 1976 maintaining that the maximum permissible balance of an individual's voting weight was one to five, and suggested that the allocation of the House of Representatives' seats among different voting districts be altered. However, correction measures have been implemented only partially. The maximum ratio of inequity was 1 to 3.94 in 1980, 1 to 4.40 in 1983 and 1 to 2.29 in 1986 after some improvement was carried out. For the House of Councilors, corresponding figures were 1 to 5.56 in 1983 and 1 to 5.85 in 1986. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court has not found this situation unconstitutional because of the 'unique nature' of the House of Councilors.

(2) Voting at home for the handicapped

Articles 49 section 2 of the Public Office Election Law stipulates that severely physically-handicapped people are entitled to vote at home. It is said that the number of handicapped people who vote under this article falls somewhere between 90 thousand and 110 thousand, but a large portion of the 3 million physically-handicapped people is estimated to be de facto disfranchised.

(3) suffrage of foreigners residing in Japan

about 870,000 foreigners live in Japan, out of whom 680 thousand are Koreans. Most of these Koreans have permanently settled in Japan. They consist of those who were forcibly brought to Japan

before 1945 and their children. Given such a historical background, it is total contradiction of justice.

This article contains the expression "All citizens". We believe that this category should include not only those with Japanese nationality but also foreigners who have permanently settled in Japan. In other words, the above mentioned Koreans need to be regarded as citizens. However, suffrage of Koreans is not provided at local government levels.

(4) right of foreigners living in Japan to assume a public office

The Japanese government maintains that one must be a Japanese citizen to become a public servant who will 'exercise public authority or be involved in the formulation of the national will.' Following this policy, with the exception of public servants in some localities, foreign nationals (including Koreans living in Japan) have not been employed as public servants in principle. The Ministry of Education has directed some local governments employing Koreans as school teachers to refrain from such employment of 'foreigners'. In view of the fact that Koreans are not guaranteed equal employment opportunities in Japan due to social discrimination, public authorities should, rather, promote their employment as public servants. Also, the category of 'public servants who will be involved in the formulation of the national will' needs to be more narrowly defined. The nationality clause should be lifted in recruiting general clerical and engineering staff for national and local government bodies.
