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May 1991

Joint Action toward the Solution of Buraku Problems

Inaugural General Meeting of Liaison Conference to Consider Present State of Dowa Problems

On Feb. 27 in Tokyo, the inaugural general meeting of the Liaison Conference to Consider the Present State of Dowa Problems (Do-Gen-Ren) was held. In addition to the representatives of the proposing groups, including the Buraku Liberation League Central Headquarters, and the National Liberal Dowa Association National Headquarters and the Ehime Pref. Dowa Measurements Council, representatives from the National Dowa Educators Association, the National Rinpokan Liaison Council, the Buraku Liberation Research Institute and the Area Improvement Measurements Institute participated in the meeting. Items of understanding and the executive system were confirmed and the inaugural declaration was adopted.

A number of Diet members were also present: they were members of the Liberal Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Komei (Clean Government) Party, the Democratic Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Union and the Union members of House of Councilors. Encouraging messages were delivered from those parties with the anticipation that Do-Gen-Ren will work toward the solution of Buraku problems.

At the inaugural general meeting, the first speaker, Mr. Shigenori Yamada, President of the National Liberal Dowa Association, National Headquarters made an address representing the proposing groups. He said, "In order to solve the Dowa problems, which it is our National task to do, we propose com-

bining our actions, especially in our present situation where discrimination still exists and discriminatory incidents continue to occur"

Then, after introducing the participating groups, Secretary-General Mr. Tasukuni Komori (A member of the House of Representatives), of the Buraku Liberation League Central Headquarters, reported on the development of the affairs up till then and proposed the items of understanding and the executive system.

Secretary-General, Komori said, since last year toward the re-opening of the Council of Area Improvement Measures, so as to assign the committee members from among the persons concerned. This achievement spontaneously resulted in organizing the present Liaison Conference for the Solution of Buraku Liberation Problems, with mutual respect to the Principles of each group. We propose to resolutely develop our joint action for the future. "Besides the items of

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understanding and the executive system, it was decided to appeal to the All Japan Dowa Measurements Council to be admitted as an observer.

Later, seventy-three Diet members (from both the House of Representative and the House of Councilors) who came to encourage the participants were introduced. Representing the Liberal Democratic Party, Mr. Yukio Nakagawa, a Member of the House of Councilors urged, "we hope you in close contact with each other will make further efforts to solve the problems"

The vice chairman of the Social Democratic Party, Makoto Tanabe said, "we want our struggle in order to realize the politics for a respectable humanity which was proposed by Mr. Jiichiro Matsumoto."

The vice chairman of the Komei Party, Hirokazu Sakai said, expressing the resolution, "The Liaison Council means a lot in the sense of reforming the present situation of this minor State concerning human rights. We have made the first step today. Let us go on fighting together,"

And the Assistant Secretary of the Democratic Socialist Party, Mr. Osamu Nakai said, "It is significant for a number of Organizations and political parties to get together, in spite of the fact that Discrimination is far from being eliminated. Let us fight together."

Representing Union members of the House of Councilors, Mr. Osamu Ikeda urged, "Let us work together to realize freedom and equality, and in particular to establish the fundamental human rights guar-

anteed in our Constitution".

Also Mr. Norihiko, Secretary General of the Office of Satsuki Eda, a Member of the House of Representatives as well as a Representative of the Social Democratic Union, made a speech; "Our Representative Mr. Eda himself has been working toward the inaugural general meeting. Problems of peace, human rights and the environment are universally indispensable tasks. We will fight together for them".

Concluding the general meeting the Vice chairman of the Ehime pref. Dowa Measurements Council, Hideo Kameoka gave a closing address, followed by Mr. Saichiro Uesugi, the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Buraku Liberation League who expressed this resolution as the Representing Executive of the Do-Gen-Ren, "We will fight for Buraku Liberation as well as for liberating human beings with the cooperation of political parties in the same way as we united for organizing the Suiheisha (National Levellers Association)"

Finally the inaugural declaration proposed by the Chairman of the National Dowa Education Research Council, Mr. Kyoichi Terasawa, was adopted. The meeting was closed with a vigorous speech by Mr. Otoichi Ueda, the Chairman of the National Rinpoken Liaison Council. He said, "It is meaningful that we have come to hold the inaugural general meeting today, having returned to the stand point of the Suiheisha. I am ninety-four years old now and I will continue to work for the elimination of discrimination"

A municipality in Yamagata prefecture decided to change the name "local community" from "Buraku" to another name in order not to be confused with "discriminated Buraku"!

Recently the following matter was made clear. In several cities, towns and villages of Yamagata prefecture in the North / East Japan there is a movement to change the name which means "local community" from "Buraku" to another name, such as "Area", "Block", "Self-governing body", etc. Residents have been using the name "Buraku" for a long time as the name of their local community. However, in 1992 the National Athletic Meeting will be held in Yamagata prefecture and the residents are worried about the image of the name "Buraku" for

participants coming from all over Japan. In another words, the people in Yamagata prefecture are afraid that the participants of the Athletic Meeting might misunderstand "Buraku" as a so-called "discriminated Buraku" and might feel uncomfortable.

BLL (The Buraku Liberation League), East Japan block thinks that the matter is serious and sent their staff-members to Yamagata to find out the facts. On March 14, 1991, in the Diet Committee on the Budget of the House of Representatives, Mr. Sadao Wada, a member of the House of Representatives



(Socialist Party of Japan) brought up this issue. Mr. Sakaki, the Director General of the Management and Coordination Agency said that if people change the name for that reason, it is discrimination. Such changes do not settle the discrimination problem.

The 3 towns of Iida-cho, Atsumi-cho and Yusa-cho are the towns which have decided on the change. The town office of Yusa-cho replied in answer to our question, that as host prefecture they decided on this so as not to make the participants of the National Athletic Meeting feel uncomfortable. This matter

was made clear last year through some newspaper companies' questions. Also this year, the central headquarters of BLL received a letter of accusation about this matter. According to the newspaper companies report, Iida-cho also decided to change the name of "Buraku" to "area", or "local self-governing body" before the Athletic Meeting begins. Atsumi-cho changed the municipal rules and decided to change the name of "Buraku" to "self-governing body" at the study meeting of the heads-of-town and "Buraku" held last year.

His Face Turned White.

Mr. "S" cannot allow the sewing machine company to settle the matter of discrimination amicably.

Mr. "S" related his experience discrimination as follows:

In April 1988, I found a job at the Sewing Machine Co., Ltd. I graduated from a college in Tokushima prefecture and studied in the department of technology. I was engaged in making a design program for machine tools in the company.

One year after starting employment, in September, I was assigned to another position, where I became acquainted with Mr. "K". But later I found him to be an eccentric person and I kept a certain distance from him in the company. Before I was subjected to his discriminatory remarks, I had been disturbed by him during work and I had been the victim of his unbelievable mischief.

One day in April 1990, "K" put his 4 fingers in front of me saying "Your face is terrible. Are you 4-finger?" My face turned white. Trying to hide my agitation I replied "What do you mean?". I was afraid that "K" had guessed my origin.

During junior high and high school days, I was an active member of the Buraku liberation movement. I was self-conceited and believed that no one could do such activity without me. However, in college I had no time for such activity because I had to earn money support myself during college. Therefore, there was little chance for me to contact the Buraku liberation movement group directly. Among my friends in col-

lege there were some people who spoke discriminatorily saying. For example, "That place is a Buraku community. . ." ,but I did not dare to discuss the matter with such people, of course, I was aware of the existence of Buraku discrimination but I could not see the problem happening to me. After that "K" said to me again, "Are you 4-finger?" When I had dinner with my colleagues after work, "K" told them, "You had better not to sit with "S" because "S" is a different race from us. "I felt sad every day. "K" hurt me as if he was pricking me with a needle I didn't want my private affairs touched. I had an urge to strike "K" in the head with a hammer many times. I had difficulty controlling my anger. Once I told "K" to stop his discriminatory remarks after I explained the reason why the Buraku problem exists. Since then "K" 's attitude to me has persistently escalated. One thing which I could not put with was the fact that "K" said he knows everything about me through "Mr.

". At first I searched for a person by that name in my neighborhood but later realized he was a fictitious character. "K" has harrassed me.

"K" is also from Tokushima prefecture, so once he knew my home town, he thought I was Burakumin and harassed me. I could not reveal my origins at my work place. Even if I could do so, "K" would have spread the story that I am "Etta" behind my back. On the other hand, some colleagues cheered me up



saying, "Don't worry about "K" and supported me.

Still, I became disgusted by the continuous harrasment and I told my father that I wanted to resign and find a job in another company. My father got very angry and insisted on publicizing this case. He said he could not stand such a person. However, as I did not have bad feelings onward the company, I asked my father not to publicize the case. The company tried to let this matter drop without taking any definite action!

On August 20, I handed in my resignation to my supervisors and told them that I wanted to resign effective September 15. In this company when an employee resigns the date was usually the 15th of the month. In those times I lived in a dormitory for employees. I had to look for an another apartment but my supervisor forced me to resign from the company effective the end of August, and I agreed against my will. After that the supervisor asked me if I had anything to say to the company. I complained about "K" 's discriminatory remarks for the first time. My supervisor said that the company regularly studied the Dowra issue once a year and asked me to treat this matter amicably. What does "amicably" mean? I wanted to pursue this remark. The supervisor of the general affairs department told me to investigate the facts. But the company did not do anything about it.

On August 30 the public employment security office began to investigate the case. My employers realized that they could not let this matter drop without taking any definite step. When I went to say good-bye to them, they asked me if the reason for my resignation was "K" 's discriminatory remarks. Hearing me answer "Yes", they told me to take my time and that they did not want to accept my notice of resignation. I got angry and answered back saying, "It's you who forced me resign as the end of August! I asked to resign effective September 15!" "You are selfish!" I did not have a bad feeling toward the company itself but even now I still hate my direct

superior and the supervisor of the general affairs department of the company. They must have studied the Dowra issue but it did not influence them. Even if I consulted them about this matter, I am sure that they had to treat this matter as something merely personal matter.

I will not escape any more!

I am a Burakumin but this is not my fault. Why do I have to suffer from discrimination? The "Buraku" issue is discussed with a very negative image even to this present day. I sincerely hope that the government will handle this matter as a national policy to be settled.

The president of the company is also from Tokushima prefecture and he sometime spoke to me personally. I like him personally even now. So I had a hard time to denounce the discriminations. I requested them to completely change the company's constitution.

Let me repeat that then I could not see discrimination as my own problem. When people become sick, people discover that health is important. In the same way I realized that I could not escape from the Buraku issue. During my college days I felt that the Buraku issue was avoidable. Now it is different. I want to study it more. I want to chang my way of thinking and I want to intervene actively for other people in order to eliminate discrimination.

Mr. Ishikawa's Release on Parole

Members of the House of Representatives took up the matter in the Diet.

Mr. Tatsukuni Komori and Mr. H. Nosaka, members of the House of Representatives, strongly

requested the immediate release of Mr. Ishikawa on parole at the meetings of the Committee on



the Budget on February 22 and 25, 1991 respectively. Mr. K. Sato, the Minister of Justice replied that he considered this matter positively and discussed it with people concerned. The governor of the Chiba prefectural prison will be expected to make a decision about this matter.

The following are the questions and answers:

Mr. Nosaka :

I would like to ask about the Sayama case. This is the case in which a young high school girl was abducted and killed. Mr. Kazuo Ishikawa was illegally arrested as a suspect through hearsay and prejudice. He was 24 years old at that time. 28 years have passed and he is 52 years old now. He was given a death sentence in the Urawa District Court during the first proceedings and then in the Tokyo High Court he was sentenced to life imprisonment. At the Supreme Court of Justice his appeal was rejected and he is requesting a retrial. Since the penalty was imposed, 13 years and 6 months have passed and the number of the days of detention pending trial are 11 years and 8 months. This means that a total 25 years and one month have passed. As you know from the discussion in the Committee on Judicial Affairs, I think the time for his release on parole is now due.

Mr. Sato, Minister of Justice :

The matter of release on parole should be decided by the committee of Regional Welfare and Relief based on an application submitted by the head of welfare facilities. In the case of Mr. Ishi-

kawa, a necessary minimum period for release on parole is enough legally. However, even if necessary conditions are fulfilled, life-sentenced prisoners usually must wait for a certain longer period of time for actual release on parole. Therefore, careful discussion will have to be done so as not to treat unfairly other life-sentenced prisoners in comparison with Mr. Ishikawa. Mr. Nosaka quoted the questions and answers at the Committee of Justice held in May, 1979 as follows: Mr. Hiroshi Nishimiya (a member of the House of representatives of those days) inquired about Mr. Ishikawa's case. In response to his question, Mr. Toyoshima, the Director of the Remedy Dept. of the Ministry of Justice replied: when a lapse of 10 years has passed, we will consider Mr. Ishikawa's case carefully and take appropriate measures.

Mr. Nosaka :

Mr. Ishikawa is the longest detained prisoner in the Chiba prefectural prison and he is a well-behaved prisoner. A guarantee for fidelity is also a criterion. There is no problem about it. As for his length of detention, Mr. Ishikawa has served 25 years and one month including the number of days of detention pending trial. Necessary conditions for release on parole are good enough. He has been treated very unfairly.

Mr. Sato, Minister of Justice :

A direct decision will be made by the director of the remedy facility. However, I will tell the persons concerned to treat this matter favorably.