



BURAKU LIBERATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

1-6-12, Kuboyoshi, Naniwa-ku, Osaka City, 556 Japan..

TEL (06)568-1300 FAX (06)568-0714

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The New Wind of Human Rights from Asia/Pacific Asia-Pacific Human Rights Conference Held

Eighteen People Joined from Eleven Foreign Countries

From June 22 to 25 the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Conference was held at Osaka International House. Participants were human rights activists or specialists, 47 were from Japan and 18 were from eleven countries of the Asia-Pacific region. The aims of the conference were 1) to make proposals to the World Conference on Human Rights sponsored by the United Nations next year; 2) to discuss the coming International Year for the World's Indigenous People; and 3) to adopt proposals toward the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre which will be established in Osaka in 1994.

The conference was sponsored by the Executive Committee (Representing Director, Kinhide Mushakoji, Prof. of Meiji Gakuin University and Secretary-General of International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination And Racism-IMADR) organized by IMADR and the Buraku Liberation League, and supported by the Prefecture of Osaka and the city of Osaka.

The four day meeting ended with a summary of the Conference and, based on discussions, the proposals toward the World Conference on Human Rights and the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre were adopted.

At 2 o'clock in the afternoon on the last day, a meeting of 1,500 participants was held at the Grand Hall of Osaka International House and anticipations toward the Asia-Pacific Information Centre were expressed from various fields.

The two members from the Buraku Liberation League, Mr. Saichiro Uesugi and Mr. Takumi Ueda, Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Central Executive Committee respectively, took part in the conference. Mr. Uesugi reported about Buraku problems.

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The Three Keynotes

The keynotes of the conference were proposed by Mr. Kinhide Mushakoji, Mr. Mukherjee Bhaswati (In charge of the UN Centre for Human Rights and the World Conference on Human Rights), and Mr. Kim Dong Hoon (Prof. of Ryukoku Univ. and Representative of Osaka Mintoren).

Representing the conference Mr. Mushakoji stated that "development" policy line adopted since the Meiji era has been primarily based on economic development, having neglected human rights and destroyed the environment of the earth, and indicated that the ruling classes of the Asia-Pacific regions have been following this line, resulting in a "development dictatorship" which violated human rights and destroyed the environment in those areas as well.

He then indicated that resistance to such developments has begun in different fields, and emphasized that resistance should be oriented to the "development" line in harmony with human rights and the environment of the earth; the human rights of indigenous people, minorities, and foreign laborers should be respected in such developments; "Rights of Progress" should be respected for the sake of people in the region and not for the sake of outsiders; and, exchanging information as well as enforcing solidarity among non-governmental organizations should be required.

The keynote speech of Mr. Bhaswati from the UN Center for Human Rights concerned the World Conference on Human Rights to be held in Vienna, Austria next year. He indicated that this conference would be important in clarifying defects as well as achievements in the 45 years since the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, and in recognition of the tasks and orientation toward the new establishment of human rights in the 21st century. He also stated that more participation and active suggestion would be required from the Asia-Pacific region and as well as from non-governmental organizations, for the success of the conference. He disclosed that the governmental meeting for the World Conference on Human Rights would be held this October in Bangkok, Thailand.

Prof. Kim proposed the keynote concerning the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre. He said "discrimination and the violation of human rights have been the world concerns" since World War II, and international societies, including the UN have been making various efforts. He also introduced the experiences in Europe and America in the



protection of human rights on local levels, experiences which should be helpful in facilitating and supporting the activities of defending human rights.

He also pointed out that on the other hand, respect of human rights has not at all been ensured so far on local levels in the Asia-Pacific regions for the time being. The task they must accomplish is the establishment of human rights information centres. Thus, the Asia-Pacific Information Centre which is to be established in Osaka in 1994 should be much anticipated.

Need To Change The Notion That Developing Countries Are Inferior

The following is the comment made by Mr. Giichi Nomura, Director of the Hokkaido Utari Association:

Hokkaido was once the place for the Ainu people. The ancestors of Ainu lived in harmony with nature. The Japanese, who regarded the Ainu as an ignorant, unenlightened race, brought them into the nation with the assimilation policy, taking away their language, their culture, and their religion. The administration was based on the Law for the Protection of the Natives in Hokkaido which is actually a discriminatory law and even now still exists. Under the law the Ainu people have been discriminated in various aspects.

Developed countries, including Japan, seem to have reached a deadlock, and some superior aspects of the life-styles of developing countries and indigenous people have come to be reconsidered. What is definitely important to Japan is the need to abandon the one-sided view that so-called developed countries are indeed developed and superior, while developing countries are undeveloped and inferior, and to adopt a life-style in harmony with nature. To achieve this goal, the Ainu New Act should be enacted as the first step.

**Need To Reorganize Democratic World**

The following is the summary of the report by Mr. Chandra Muzaffer, a human rights activist in Malaysia:

'Development' has meant the strengthening of the domination of developing countries by advanced countries. When we look at the world, 85% of the wealth is concentrated in 25% of the population. This tendency has been even reinforced year by year with the result that 1 billion people, mainly from developing countries, are illiterate and in absolute poverty. International policies, security, international information and culture are still under the control of leading countries. However, the United States, the leading country of the large nations, is facing a deadlock in the fields of economics, politics, human rights and culture. On the other hand, Japan and Germany are taking internationally more important roles, and solidarities among developing countries are being reinforced.

What is required in such a world-wide upheaval is the democratization of every field, including the United Nations. In the process, the solidarity of international non-government organizations is expected to take particularly big roles. In the face of

destruction of the environment, we have to make fundamental changes in our way of life which up to now has required us to waste natural resources.

Earnest Expectation to Japan .

Finally, it should be mentioned that earnest expectation was indicated unanimously by the guests from abroad, especially with regard to Japanese non-governmental organizations.

Japan has become more influential in international aspects than most Japanese may think . How human rights are recognized in Japan is, therefore, being questioned. If Japan remains as it is, it will lose respect, be criticized, and isolated from the world. This might lead Japan to destruction. To prevent it, Japan is required to admit and apologize for the sins it committed during World War II. The next thing for Japan to do is to adopt the Human Rights Conventions already adopted by various international organizations, including the United Nations. Japan must found a Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre as soon as possible, enhance the awareness of human rights in the country, and contribute to the improvement of the situation of human rights in the Asia-Pacific region.

Discrimination Against Burakumin in Japan***by Saichiro Uesugi******President, Buraku Liberation League, Japan***

Report by BLL in the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Conference, 3rd Session "Development and Its Impact on Economic and Social Rights" 23 June 1992

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Madam Chairperson, I would first like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak today.

As President of the Buraku Liberation League of Japan, I would like to present the case of discrimination against Burakumin, or Buraku people, in Japan.

According to the governmental statistics, it is said that there are 4,603 Buraku communities throughout the country with about 1,150,000 population. However, these figures only represent those areas in which projects have been implemented for the elimination of discrimination. Actual figures may amount to 6,000 communities in which 3million

Burakumin live.

The origin of the discrimination against Burakumin differ according to the region, but it is generally considered that the system of the The main purpose of creating this social class was to divide and rule the farmers, the then major productive force.

Our ancestors were placed at the very bottom of the social stratification, and forced to engage in such jobs as disposing of dead cattle and horses and low-class executioners.

At the end of the feudal era, discrimination against Burakumin was even strengthened in order to maintain the social class system, regulating even details of their daily life such as clothes to wear. Our ancestors then finally rose up against the persecution.

With the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan joined the modern international community. Japan's modernization was 100 years behind the Western



countries, and therefore had to make compromises with the feudal systems, rather than changing them drastically, and pursued a rapid development.

Through this process, a new social stratification was created after the Meiji Restoration with Emperor at the top, and the policies of industrial promotion and military buildup were adopted.

Under these circumstances, discrimination against Burakumin did not resolve but rather took new forms. As a result, many of Burakumin, left unemployed or semi-unemployed, or as tenant farmers, had to live a hard life. They continued to be the target of harsh discrimination.

On 3 March 1922, 70 years ago from now, our ancestors organized themselves to form the National Levelers Association aiming towards the elimination of discrimination. The Leveler's Declaration adopted at its founding meeting has had and still has today a great impact in Japan as the country's first declaration of human rights.

The spirit of the National Levelers Association lied in the fact that it called on Burakumin not to conceal or be ashamed of being a Burakumin but to take pride in themselves and rise up against discrimination. It further aimed towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination and building a society where human dignity was respected.

Since then our people fought resolutely against oppression, denouncing daily-occurring discriminatory cases, including one in the military. But the then government suppressed the Leveler's movement and many activists were arrested. While suppressing the democratic movements within its borders, Japan invaded Korea, China and Southeast Asian countries which led to the war and did much damage to peoples in these countries.

After the defeat in the war in August 1945, a new constitution was drafted based on the reflection on the war. The new constitution denied discrimination generally, but in actuality discrimination against Burakumin was not abolished but Burakumin were victimized through the process of the rapid economic restoration and development.

The situation of Burakumin in the aspects of living conditions and labor did not change even after WWII. Their housing and working conditions, as well as the level of education remained poor. For example, it was common in urban areas that a family of six lived in a small room and that children could not even go to primary school.

In order to improve such situations, we rebuilt the Buraku liberation movement immediately after

the war, and have developed, especially since 1951, a campaign aiming to improve the derogatory situations brought by discrimination. As a result of the campaign, the Cabinet Council on Dowa Policy issued a recommendation in August 1965. The recommendation placed the solution of Buraku issue as a priority for Japanese society and clearly stated that it is the responsibility of State and the people as a whole, to solve the problem.

Our struggles eventually expanded nationwide, using the recommendation as a tool, which led to the enactment in July 1969 of the Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects. Under this and other series of special laws, a variety of projects have been implemented for Buraku communities for these 23 years.

Thanks to these projects, the living conditions of Burakumin have improved to a certain extent. For example, the improvement of the living environment has reached 70% of the targeted level. Now all Buraku children finish compulsory education, and the ratio of children going on to high school exceeds 80%, closing the gap with the national average to a few percentage points.

This does not mean, however, that the problem has been solved. There are still 1,000 Buraku communities around the country where no projects have been implemented up to today. The situation in these communities remains unchanged. Even in those areas where the improvement projects have been implemented, full-fledged measures to improve the situation in the field of job and education have yet to be taken. To cite a few examples, the ratio of those Burakumin living on relief is seven to eight times higher than the national average. Many Burakumin still today are engaged in unsecured jobs, work with small-sized companies and do manual labor. The average household income remains only 70% of the national average. With regard to the ratio of those who go on to high school, despite the improvement in the past years, there is still a gap of 10 percentage points when taking into account the high dropout rate among Buraku students. The ratio of Buraku high school students advancing to colleges or universities is half the nation's average.

Discriminatory incidents continue to occur in marriage, at workplaces and even at schools. What is more alarming recently is that discriminatory scribbling or letters saying, such as, "Kill all Burakumin" are on the increase. In 1989, it was found that the locations of Buraku communities and malicious documents saying such as, "Build nuclear testing sites in Buraku and kill them all," were



distributed using the "Packet Communications System", an up-to-date communications system combining a personal computer and amateur radio.

From these situations of Buraku discrimination, we have realized that it was necessary for the government to enact a Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation to not only improve the living and working conditions and education but also prevent discriminatory incidents and eliminate psychological discrimination. We have then carried out a campaign to demand a fundamental law since 1985.

When looking back the history of Buraku and the liberation movement after the Meiji Restoration, we may draw the following conclusions:

Firstly, modernization of a society does not automatically dissolve discrimination which previously existed but rather utilizes it in a new form for the modernization itself. Secondly, it is only when oppressed people themselves rise up and make strenuous efforts that governmental or municipal measures for the elimination of discrimination are taken. Thirdly, when democratic movements for human rights and the elimination of discrimination are suppressed within a given country, this may lead to invasion into other neighboring nations and eventually to war. Lastly, I would like to touch upon the new challenges that the Buraku liberation movement faces and its future direction. One concerns the problem occurring due to the rapid internationalization of Japan. Today it is said that there are at least 300,000 foreign workers in Japan. However, despite their important role in this society, these foreign workers are working in extremely poor conditions, deprived of their rights as workers. For example, the leather industry, a representative Buraku industry, suffers a severe shortage of labor, and foreign workers are now filling the gap. But since Japan does not admit in principle manual laborers, they are labeled as "unlawful workers" and placed under extremely insecure conditions.

Another example is a grass-roots exchange of people developing at literacy classes. Literacy classes are run by the Buraku communities so that Burakumin can acquire the ability to read and write which they were deprived of due to generations of discrimination. Recently foreigners are beginning to participate in the literacy classes which are now becoming the place for not only learning how to read and write but also promoting mutual understanding between peoples. For example, participants teach each other how to cook their own cuisine or enjoy their own traditional songs and dances.

Meanwhile, Japanese corporations are now present all over the world including the Asia-Pacific region, and causing "human rights frictions", pollutions and other problems in the host countries. Japanese ODA (official development assistance), one of the largest in the world, is also the target of criticism that it is not helping those who need the aid most.

Japan is now on the turning point. Some Japanese argue that its military presence, not only economic and political, in the international community should be strengthened. We consider, however, that we should not repeat the history which we already experienced. The path that Japan has to take is, in our view, not in the direction, but rather to truly reflect on its acts in W.W.II. and to contribute to building a world where peace, human rights and environment are secured. It was from this viewpoint that we took the initiative to establish the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) in January 1988 with our friends around the world working for the same goal of eliminating discrimination. IMADR has developed various activities since the foundation such as anti-apartheid campaigns and exchange with Asian peoples through literacy activities. Considering the situation as stated above, it should be indeed timely that an Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre will be established here in Osaka and I should like to express our firm support to the plan. We expect that the Centre will provide a forum for mutual exchange between peoples who are fighting against discrimination in the Asia-Pacific region and undertake research projects, such as a comparative study on the situations of Burakumin in Japan and discriminated-against groups originating from the caste system in India.

To conclude my statement, I would like to reiterate our commitment, as the Buraku liberation movement, to establishing the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre. Thank you.



Discrimination Against Buraku, Today (5)

- Education -(cont'd.)

3. Big difference concerning the ratio of those entering university.

(1) Comparing the change in the national average, the percentage of those entering university in the Buraku is around one-half to two-thirds. The figures indicate that there is a big difference between Buraku and outside Buraku, and it is a larger figure than the ratio of those entering senior high-school.

(2) A remarkable tendency in each municipality concerning the ratio of entering senior high-school can be seen in the process of the dissolution of the difference between Buraku and outside Buraku around 1975. However, in the case of those entering university there is no such rapid phenomenon. In other words, since the end of the World War II there have been no great improvements in this matter from first to last. Giving examples for Kyoto and Hiroshima prefectures, from 1970 to 1973, such a dissoluble tendency became somewhat narrow, but did not last long.

(3) The biggest problem is that since 1975 the ratio of those entering university in each municipality has begun to decrease generally. As a result, the tendency

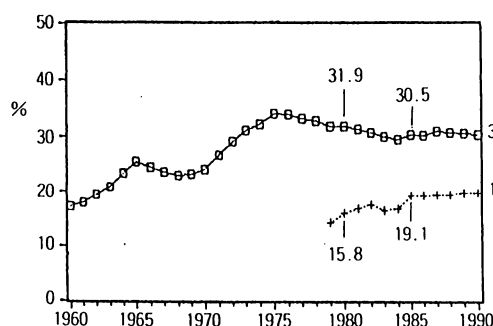
to decrease was much stronger in the case of Buraku. Such a strong tendency can be seen especially in Kyoto, Osaka and Hiroshima.

(4) For example, in Tottori prefecture, the percentage of those entering university indicates a consistently low figure. According to each municipality the tendency is different. Anyway, statistically a future development is not bright.

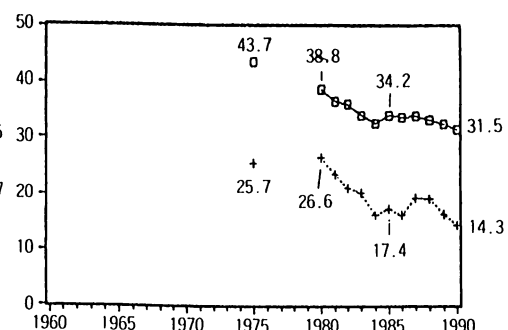
(5) As can be seen in the formation of school education, the current problem about differentials in school education is now moving to the ratio of the graduate of higher school education for both in Buraku and outside Buraku. However, as far as the university, the differential might remain as an undeniable fact. Until now we have thought much of the ratio of entering senior high-school as an index describing in the quality of educational opportunity. From now on we should reflect on the matter of the university which has been put under severe conditions.

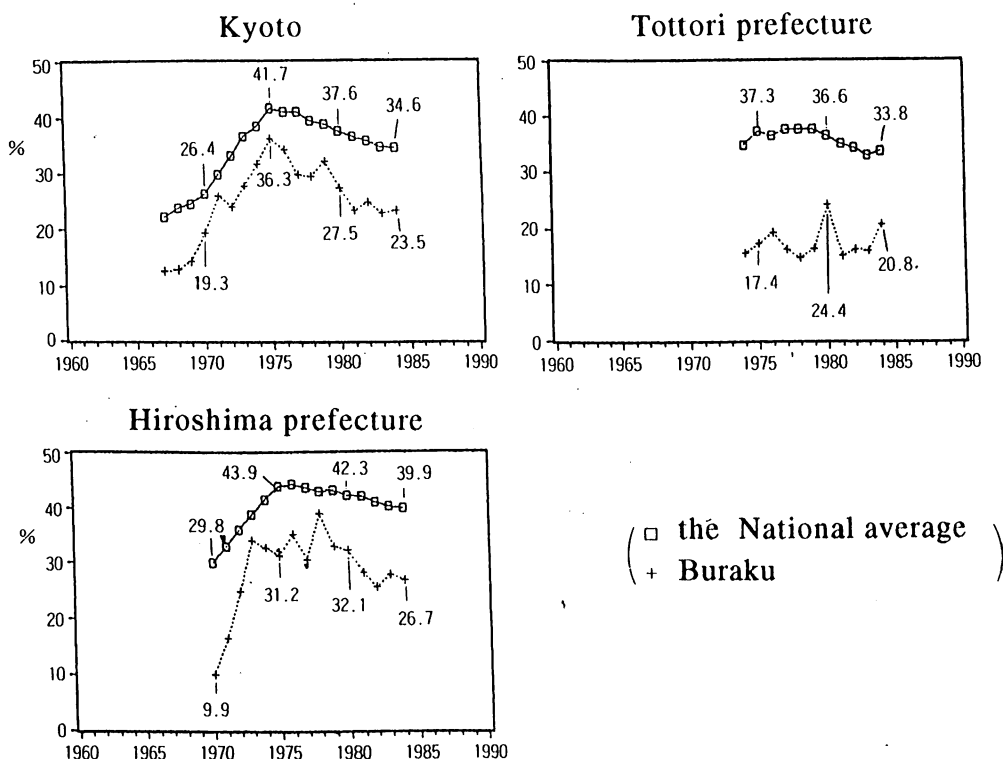
Fig. 13 The ratio of those entering university

the National average
(researched by Ministry of Education)



Osaka





Detailed Permanent Address Required on Resume In 19 Cities in Tokyo Metropolis

Tokyo Branch- It was learned out last year that nineteen cities in the Tama area including Tama city had been using a resume form which could have been used in screening Buraku people when they employed workers. These administration bodies shattered the efforts of BLL(Buraku Liberation League) which has been endeavoring to abolish discrimination in employment. In Tama city, in particular, the resume form used was of the type which requires the street number of the permanent address. Our Metropolitan League held a fact finding meeting on this matter on February 24.

At the fact finding meeting, Tama city officials apologized to us for having prepared and used a resume form on which the street number of the person's permanent address was required. They said, "We should have realized we were in a position to instruct private enterprises not to have such discrimination. We feel very sorry." In analyzing the cause, they added, "We have not made sufficient efforts on the 'Dowa' problem as a city administration. From now on we will work on it seriously."

To the question of why such a form was prepared and also the fact that no one thought it inappropriate,

they replied that it was just 'a careless mistake at the time of preparing the form' or 'the lack of understanding on the part of the staffs in charge'. The members of the Metropolitan League at the meeting were not satisfied with this reply, pointing out their discrepancy. They also indicated that the city has not taken any measures on Buraku problems despite the fact that Buraku exists in the city, and they asked them if might be the policy of the city not to be involved in Buraku problems on purpose. The city officials gave an evasive answer to this question. They said they knew that Buraku exists in the city, but they 'did not avoid the problem on purpose'. Severe accusations followed, expressing the doubt that the city administration really understood the importance of the matter. Our Metropolitan League proposed to hold more fact finding meetings to clarify some serious points about this issue and the City agreed. Those attending the meeting included Mr. Fujii, Deputy Mayor and Mr. Hijikata, Director of General Affairs representing the city, and Mr. Matsumoto, Chairman of the Metropolitan League and the representatives from the branches.



Blunt Discrimination Appeared in a Marriage Issue Creating Stir among those Concerned in Shibata City, Niigata Pref.

Blunt marriage discrimination occurred in Shibata city, Niigata Pref. The couple, twenty seven year-old Mr. U and Ms. Y, aged 23, fought against the discrimination and finally had their wedding and reception party at a hotel in the city with their friends and colleagues attending. But since their parents and relatives did not participate in the wedding, this case was rather unusual in Shibata city, where the issue of marriage discrimination has seldom come into the open, creating a stir among the people concerned.

The incident happened a year ago. Mr. U and Ms. Y, both grew up in Shibata city, having lived together for three years. When they decided to get married, Y's parents opposed their marriage and made some blunt discriminatory remarks: "If you are pregnant with a Buraku kid, I wonder what kind of creature you are going to give birth to." "People there are descendants of burglars or murderers. Even if you have a 'human' baby, it would be the descendant of a criminal. You should leave him." Ms. Y was even confined in her house for a while.

It was immediately after this incident that Mr. Hasegawa, the Chief Secretary of BLL (Buraku Liberation League) Shibata branch was informed. He was then asked to be their go-between. Mr. Hasegawa is Mr. U's uncle. He accepted their request, and also took up the incident as a serious case of marriage discrimination. He called on members of the Joint Struggle for Cooperation, and he himself tried to persuade the people around them. Among the members of the Joint Struggle, there was a school teacher who happened to know Y's sister. He helped in persuading Y's family. But her mother would not meet with him. He tried in vain to persuade at least Y's sister to attend the wedding.

On April 23, Mr. and Mrs. Hasegawa called on Y's mother as a go-between to persuade her. But she would not open the door for them, making some excuse such as she was taking a bath or she was on the phone. She finally turned off the light after having kept Mr. and Mrs. Hasegawa waiting at the door for forty minutes.

Deepest Understanding Needed.

The newly wed couple who never gave up their love in spite of the discrimination, had sixty people to celebrate with them. Mr. U said firmly, "We would like to prove to everyone that our marriage is a happy, successful one even if it takes time."

Mr. Hideaki Watanabe, the Superintendent of Education in Shibata city, was among the attendants of the reception. He was principal of the junior high school when Y was a student there. It was the first experience for him to attend such a 'discriminated' wedding. He said, "I realized that we need to understand the Buraku problem from the deepest part of our lives". Also, Mr. Goto, the Director of Social Welfare Office of Shibata city stated that he realized how education is important. Mr. Masao Tashiro, the Vice-chairman of the Shibata Acting Committee for a 'Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation', expressed his anger to the serious situation of discrimination. "What have we done against discrimination? We need a drastic reform in the education of society, as well as 'Dowa' education. We shouldn't allow such discrimination to occur again. A 'Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation' is needed more than ever for this purpose".

The Shibata Branch of BLL has taken this opportunity to further discuss the problem of discrimination and they are working toward extending the movement to prevent such incidents from occurring again.

