

Title	THE ORIGIN OF THE ENTERPRISE UNION IN THE POST-WAR LABOR MOVEMENT OF JAPAN
Sub Title	
Author	飯田, 鼎(IIDA, KANAE)
Publisher	Keio Economic Society, Keio University
Publication year	1970
Jtitle	Keio economic studies Vol.7, No.1 (1970. ) ,p.46- 63
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	
Genre	Journal Article
URL	<a href="https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AA00260492-19700001-0046">https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AA00260492-19700001-0046</a>

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# THE ORIGIN OF THE ENTERPRISE UNION IN THE POST-WAR LABOR MOVEMENT OF JAPAN

KANAE IIDA

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## I

August 15, 1945, when the Japanese imperialism collapsed, is regarded by the workers as the memorable day for their emancipation from the oppression, humiliation and barbarism of a despotic government. Generally, the war defeat was resented by the people as a sad event, but the Japanese workers took it as a happy dawn for the Japanese labour movement.

The Japanese trade union movement started as early as 1900, and went on developing up to 1930, though rather intermittently. After 1930, however, it was interrupted by the successive wars: the Manchurian Incident (1931), the Sino-Japanese War (1937), and World War II. The result was that the labor movement was suppressed and all the trade unions of Japan were paralyzed and transformed into the totalitarian *Sampo*, consolidating all the industrial workers to serve the nationalistic aims, thereby practically forbidding any labor movement or labor dispute.

Along with the deterioration of the general living conditions, the industrial workers suffered more with their wages being so lowered that it was almost impossible for them to maintain their bare existence; they hovered on the verge of starvation.

Therefore, the downfall of the Japanese militarism and despotic government following the war defeat was a golden opportunity for the realization of the freedom of democratic rights, and for the encouragement of socialistic labor movement.

This turn of events which was a terrible shock to the 'Old Japan' and which is often called the 'revolution from above', was in fact nothing but the democratization of the country under the pressure of the Occupation Forces; it was not an affair of 'the Japanese People, by the Japanese People and for the Japanese People'.

## II

The fundamentals of the democratization policy by the Occupation Forces were derived from the 'Potsdam Declaration' centering around the following practical points: (1) a thoroughgoing democratization of the government by the revision of the Constitution, (2) the agrarian reform and the abolition of a multitude of small tenant farms, (3) disestablishment of *Zaibatsu* (plutocratic cliques) according to the Anti-Capital-Centralization Act, (4) the reform of the local autonomy and the police administration, aiming at the suppression of the concentrated political power, (5) a drastic improvement in educational system, (6) the enactment of equal rights between the sexes, (7) the enforcement of the measures to promote and protect the trade union movement.

It is true that the post-war Japan made a remarkable progress in labour movement. This was owing to the loss of confidence and authority among the ruling classes, and to the heightened sense of self-respect and self-reliance among the workers, which resulted from their participation in the newly established social order.

Here we consider the years under the occupation by the Allied Forces (1945–1957) by the following three periods according to how the post-war trade unionism proceeded. The first is the time when trade unionism was encouraged by the Allied Forces. In this period, an extraordinary development of labor movement was made with such definite steps as a steady and rapid formation of trade unions, the two year management of industry under the control of trade union, the rapid organization of the enterprise trade union, and the intense strike activities by trade unions to a great surprise of the employers. The second is the period of eleven months from February, 1945, to January, 1946, when the workers rose to counteract the employers' attempt the industrial rationalization of enterprises, both employers and employees being threatened by a galloping and destructive inflation. The zenith was the plan to put up a nation wide strike of February 1, 1947, the first general strike of Japan. This, however, was suspended by General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. The third is the three year period from the failed General Strike of February 1, 1947 to June, 1950, when the Korean War broke out, and the *Sohyo* (The General Council of Japanese Trade Unions) was formed immediately after. The *Sohyo* came into being as a result of the splitting in the labor movement such as the antagonism between the left-wing political groups and the trade unions, and the discord among many trade unions. And these troubles were aggravated by the ever deepening international tension between the two opposing great powers, it is better to use full name the United States and Soviet Russia. So, this essay aims at observing and reflecting on the February 1 Strike, the turning point in the course of the Japanese labour movement, especially, on the origination of the enterprise union in the post-war labour movement.

Even though the labor movement was promoted and encouraged by the de-

mocratization policy of the Allied Forces, some of its leaders who exerted a decisive influence in the orientation of the trade unionism in its formative years were the survivors of the pre-war days.

The national trade union organization of pre-war time was divided into the following two sects, *Sodomei* (The General Alliance of Trade Unions), the right wing, and the *Zempyo* (The National Congress of Trade Unions of Japan), the legal left wing, but with the development of labor movement after the war, it was necessary to have a powerful national centre, liquidating its splitted condition so as to bring about a real unity. Thus a preparatory meeting to secure a consolidated trade unionism was held on October 10, 1945. On this occasion it was resolved that the post-war trade union movement strives for the reconstruction of the war-stricken industries and for the improvement of working conditions and wages under the principle of a federated form of industrial unions, and that it admits the freedom of union members to join any political party. Some time later, the Central Committee for the Preparation of the Trade Union Organization was established.<sup>(1)</sup> On November 5, the *Sodomei* was formed by Matsuoka, Nishio, Kanemasa and other leaders; they persuaded many other trade unions, that had been led by communists, socialists and trade unionists, to join.

It is important to know that the workers had to cope with many difficult problems which they had never thought of before. For example, in the midst of the destruction and the ruins of the factories, productive apparatus, machines and other equipments which they had acquired in the preceding decades, they were to start their reconstruction. In other words, the rebuilding of their own enterprises was vitally related to their fate to serve as the bearer of Japanese labor movement, or the champion for the economic reconstruction of democratic Japan.

Moreover, under the government of the Allied Forces, the Japanese working people had to lend their hands in the revival of monopoly capitalism which was very much like the aggressive, capitalistic policy pursued by the pre-war government that had dragged them into the Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War. They naturally felt it quite contradictory that they had to support the policy of the Allied Forces trying to reconstruct the economy of Japan in the line of monopoly

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(1) To say that the industrial disputes disappeared is not necessarily right, as a small number of them were conducted by some trade unions, is shown by the table belows:

Year	dispute	trade dispute by union	number of strikers	number of unions	number of union members
1937	2,126	628	123,730	837	359,290
1938	1,050	262	18,341	731	375,191
1939	1,120	258	72,835	517	365,804
1940	718	226	32,160	49	9,455
1941	330	158	8,562	11	895

I. Suehiro, *History of Japanese trade Union Movement*, (Japanese edition) 1954, Tokyo, pp. 93-93.

(1) Minoru Takano: *The Labor Movement of Japan* (Japanese eidtion) 1958, Tokyo, pp. 10-11.

capitalism, for their dream of a social reconstruction was markedly different from that. The point was that their aspiration for a socialistic form of economic reorganization of Japan was given not a whit of thought in the economic rehabilitation scheme of the Occupation Forces. The slogan, 'Production, First', appeared quite consistent with the pressing requirement of the economic recovery on the basis of an assumed cooperation between capital and labor than by the strike strategies elaborately prepared by the working masses. Thus the trade unions in most enterprises were taken as the promoters and bearers of production than as the defenders of the living and working conditions of workers.

It is true that the post-war trade unions contributed much for the elevation of the workers' living conditions. The waves of the subsequent vehement inflation, however, swallowed this trifling effect, letting the employers gain enormously by manufacturing productive goods and stocks.

Under these conditions, the enterprise unions made advance, even embracing the managerial officers as their members. Surely, they were very much like a company union, although they continued protesting and fighting against the inflation policy of the government. It is to be admitted, however, that the post-war Japanese labor movement needed such a thing as the enterprise union. It was, in a sense, a workshop committee consisting of the representatives of several crafts and occupations, as the enterprise union included all the members of an enterprise or a company. However, it differed basically from a craft union or an industrial union (horizontal union) in that in spite of its inclusion of all the workers of an enterprise it is indifferent to the occupational and industrial solidarity beyond the framework of its own enterprise. This is an important point which should be kept in mind.

Now, we examine the peculiarities of the post-war trade union movement. A series of strikes burst out since October, 1945. They were the spontaneous movements demanding the industrial management. At first, they were active as a defensive for the minimum living conditions menaced by the appalling inflation. It was a great surprise, however, to the governing classes that these movements came to take the tendency to accuse them with the responsibility for the war and censure them for their inability in industrial management.

The employees of the *Yomiuri* Press, one of the greatest newspapers in Japan, demanded the resignation of all the managerial officers, and resolved to make the Press a democratic organization, proposing:

- 1) The formation of a *Yomiuri* employees' trade union;
- 2) A thoroughgoing democratization of the company's machinery;
- 3) The improvement of the pay scale of all the employees, and the respect for their individual characters;
- 4) The formation of a voluntary consumer society and a mutual-aid society.

It is to be noted that the *Yomiuri* employees stressed the importance of organizing their union as an enterprise union all the way through, although they joined the United Press Trade Union and the Industrial Union. Another point which

they were seriously concerned was the reorganization of the machinery and the structure of the Press that had been accommodating to the war-operative policies of the government. While the *Yomiuri* strike was on, the 'industrial management by trade union' was a vogue and the management conference committee was being set up. The strike of the *Yomiuri* was really significant that it acted as a pioneer to the post-war trade union movement and contributed much to show the general direction for it, giving stimulus and useful suggestions.

The most striking tactics was the sabotage taken by the employees of the *Keisei* Electric Railway Company, the railroad running from Tokyo to Narita where a large-scale international airport was to be built in future. This strategy was started as a movement refusing the service to sell and collect tickets. It not only succeeded in the attainment of a wage raise but helped in the enhancement of workers' willingness to work and of their efficiency.

The movement, however, for the 'industrial management by labour' about this time was centered mainly around the democratization of an enterprise, instead of trying to take over the overall management of an industry, that is, the employees, whose daily life being insecure on account of an extraordinary inflation, devoted their energies to demanding the reopening of an enterprise that had suspended its production because of the prevalent high prices of material and stock commodities, and their pressing concern was not in such a matter as the socialization of Japanese industry, or the denial of the capitalistic order of production.

It is true that the Japanese labor movement is traditionally socialistic, but this idea was not well permeated with the post-war working masses, or they were even indifferent to it. The Japanese labourers and the intellegentzia were not fully acquainted with the theories of anarcho-syndicalism and guild-socialism, and were not conscious what an important role they should play in the labor movement from about 1905 to 1920. Most of the revolutionary ideologies and thoughts imported from Western capitalistic countries up to 1940's did not take root in the Japanese working masses. The points should be more fully inquired.

On December, 1945, the employees of the *Toshiba* Electric Company, one of the largest heavy-electric works, organized its enterprise union and resolved the following: (1) the recognition of the trade union, (2) the institutionalization of collective bargaining, (3) the recognition of collective agreement, (4) the base-up of salaries and wages, at least 50 times of the current rate, and (5) this base-up to be effected in January, 1946.

Examining these demands centering about the right of combination and that of collective bargaining, we can see that the employees came to take such a determined action because of the obstinate and hostile attitude on the part of the employer. Contrary to the expectation, the employees met a complete rebuff and thus they entered into the strategy of the 'industrial management by enterprise union' and organized the Tokyo and Yokohama Area Trades' Union Conference of the *Toshiba* Company.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(2) Cf. *The Documentary History of Japanese Labour Movement*, edited by the Labour Mi-

The most significant point to be noted here is that this *Toshiba* Conference was the first one which comprised the unions under a series of related capitals, but did not go beyond that limits.

Historically considered,<sup>(3)</sup> if a trade union should come into being as a craft union, a general union or an industrial union as was the case in Europe, the making of the trade unions in post-war Japan was quite different from them. They were organized as an employees' society in an enterprise such as workshop, company or factory. The formation of a federated union was a necessary outcome under these conditions.

After all, this dispute at *Toshiba* ended with the recognition of the enterprise union, the improvement of some working conditions including a revision of wage system it would be better to give 2 more examples the add etc., etc. on January 22. On the basis of the agreement thus entered, there was instituted a management conference committee between the Kanto Area Trade Union Federation of the *Toshiba* (centering about Tokyo and Yokohama) and the Kansai Area Trade Union Federation of *Toshiba* (centering about Osaka and Kobe). It is very impressive that Article I of this committee provides: 'this committee aims at coming to an understanding between the employers and the employees, and confers on the establishment of the democratic system of management, the development of *Toshiba*, and the promotion of the welfare and happiness of the employees.' The committee consisted of twenty-one members with the president as chairman, and the ten members being elected each from the employers and the employees. This conference decided the matters on the management and the improvement of the company's organization, the democratic management of personnel affairs, the working conditions of employees, the well-being and welfare of the employed, the standard rate of wages etc.

This conference was a precedent to and a transitory form of a complete enterprise union and was used as the machinery for the negotiation between the employer and the employed. In a word, it never tried to supersede the capitalistic management, but its aim was in securing the right to establish an enterprise union so that the labor contract may be concluded.

However, what was important was the contents of the labor contract. For example, Article I of the provisions of the enterprise union (in the making) prescribes that "the employees of each *Toshiba* enterprise should be the members of an enterprise union." Thus, the trade union as such was an exclusive entity separated from other enterprises. It was deficient in the open phase of a horizontal trade organization. Article II prescribes that the said enterprise union retains the freedom to join an outside trade union and cooperate with it, but this act should be reported to the enterprise concerned without delay. This provides the enterprise for an excuse to interfere with the self-direction of a trade union.

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nistry (1945-46) (Japanese edition)

(3) E. H. Phelps Brown: *The Growth of British Industrial Relations, A Study from the Standpoint of 1906-14, 1959*, London, pp. 114ff (Chapter III)

As is described above, in the case of the *Toshiba* trade union, it was through the mechanism of a conference that the reconstruction of the company with its own capital, and the improvement of working conditions were executed. The first phase of the post-war Japanese labour movement was characterized by the reconstruction of an enterprise by the co-operation between employers and employees, and by the betterment of the working conditions within the logic of capitalism.

On the other hand, the case of the enterprise union at the *Tsurumi* Manufacturing Works of the *Nippon* Steel Pipe Company was quite different. This dispute was the struggle which, diametrically opposed to the logic of capitalism, trying to take over the entire management. On December 24, 1946, the enterprise union was formed with 2,000 members who decided the following: (1) the recognition of the enterprise union, (2) the recognition of the right of collective bargaining and dispute, and (3) the improvement of the employees' wages, that is the threefold increase of the real income. The first and the second were approved immediately, but the third was refused. The union thereon declared its intention to go into the industrial management by the workers in the way which was entirely different from the preceding *Toshiba* Management Conference Committee, giving a strong shock to the Company.

The *Tsurumi* Manufacturing Works, that had been producing the iron and steel plate for shipbuilding to be used at the *Tsurumi* Shipbuilding Yard, was a department of the integrated manufacturing works of the *Nippon* Steel Pipe Company. However, as the latter did not continue the full operation, the iron and steel plate for shipbuilding was piled in a storehouse ever increasingly, failing to find market for sale. The *Tsurumi* enterprise union transformed a part of the manufactures into the materials for railways and house-building<sup>(4)</sup>. Of course, this measure was adopted, taking into consideration the co-operative struggle with its related works.

This step by the *Tsurumi* enterprise union caused the Company a great embarrassment. So, the latter proceeded to ask for a conciliation at the Conciliation Committee, but it was too late. The enterprise union not only refused this proposal, but went on strengthening its industrial management. In order to attain their purpose, there was instituted. The Conference of the Representatives for Production and Sale, chosen from among the lower officials, exclusive of the section chiefs and up, with the executive committeemen chosen from among the workers. Through this machinery, all the productive managements were to be carried as shown below:

President of the executive committee  
Six members of the brain-trust  
Management Committee  
Standing executive committee  
Workshop committee

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(4) *Ibid.*, *Documentary History*, pp. 29-30.



Executive committee

Shop-steward committee

The peculiarity to be noted in this 'industrial management by workers' was the inclusion of personnel affairs in it, exclusive of the higher officials—section chiefs and up.

The greatest weakness in this case of 'industrial management' was that the enterprise union had no right to meddle in the company's accountant administration with the result that the salaries and wages of the clerks and workers were paid from the head office of The *Nippon* Steel Pipe Company in an ordinary way. The union distributed the benevolent and necessary goods deposited to the enterprise to the union members at low prices without the enterprise's permission, and the want of productive materials made the normal proceeding of production management very difficult, and thus the industrial management by the union faced the crisis and collapsed at last. On January 28, 1946, all proposals and claims of the union were unconditionally complied by the employer, and the industrial management by the workers came to an end. This epoch-making dispute must be considered from two points of view: What differences are there between this made of movement in post-war Japan and the European labor movement in the post-World War I? Wherein are the causes of this final collapse? What measures did the managers, the government and the workers take in this dispute?

It is clear that the social and economic chaos as happened after the last war is the best condition for the upheaval of working class movement. As examples similar to the post-war situation of Japan, the conditions of Great Britain and Germany after World War I give us many useful suggestions. In 1918, the coalition government of Lloyd George obtained 474 seats, while the labor party and the 'Liberals' of Asquith, only 57 and 26 respectively, Ramsay MacDonald and the socialists of I.L.P. were defeated because of the voters' antagonism against their anti-war campaign. Under such a situation, the coalition government had to face the problems as the conclusion of the peace-treaty and the transitory switching of the war-time to the peace-time economy. One of the important measures in this connection was the abolition of the compulsory arbitration clauses of the Munitions Acts, prohibiting any strike and dispute during the war-time, and also to make the existing wage rates enforceable as legal minimum wage for a period<sup>(5)</sup> of time. In the course of 1919, there was passed the Restoration of the Pre-War Labor Practices Act, which meant the return of the industrial relations of the pre-war time, but the coal industry and railway service were still under the direct state control. The Whitley Council was formed for the purpose of opposing and suppressing the furious labor movement. This council was provided in 1917 in many industries on the recommendation of the Whitley Commission on the Relation of Employers and Employed. However, they could not be set up in coal, cotton, machine and other industries because of the hard resistance by the trade unions in them. They were established only at the national level,

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(5) Henry Pelling: *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 1963, London, p. 160.

not the workshops, because the employers feared the interference of trade unions with their prerogative in management, though the Whitley Council was set up in the Post Office, the Civil Service, and the Royal Dockyards, that is, in the sphere of government administration<sup>(6)</sup>. As soon as the war was over, however, the conditions of the labor movement and industrial relations completely changed and even the police constables threatened to go on strike, which extended to other workers, including the vigorous uprising of the miners who plunged into a large-scale strike, demanding the six-hours working day, the level-up of 30 percent of wages and the nationalization of coal and metal mines. Lloyd George had to set up the Sankey Commission for discussing and considering the question of wage and the industry nationalization narrowly suspending the strike. The government was forced to confer with the Miners' Federation on the appointment of the commissioners including Robert Smillie, three other leaders of the Federation, Sidney Webb, R. H. Tawney and Sir Leo Chiozza Money. The Sankey Commission consisted of the socialists and the socialist historians; they recommended the scheme prepared by the Federation, including the nationalization of the industry and its control by a National Mining Council, although the conservative party strongly objected to them. So, the government rejected the nationalization of the industry and the demands of the miners, naturally worsening the relations of the government to the Miners' Federation and the Trade Union Congress, resulting in the formation of the tripple alliance for the common struggle by the National Union of Railwaymen, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and the National Transport Workers Federation. The demands for the nationalization of mines, a wage increase, the opposition to the dismissal of workers and a shorter working hours united the coal-miners, the transport workers and the railway employees into a gigantic strike. However, as against this movement, the government legalized the notorious Emergency Powers Bill,<sup>(7)</sup> whereby they could issue an order to stop the strike.

After the depression of summer, 1920, the government decided to decontrol both the mines and the railways on August 31st, 1921, but finding that a heavy loss being incurred by the coal industry, they announced the five month postponement for the transfer of mines, and requested a large wage cut. The coal-miners rejected the request. Being locked out on the day of decontrol, March 31, they again went into the Tripple Alliance. The National Railwaymen Union led by J. H. Thomas recommended to the Miners' Federation a negotiation with the government, only to be refused. There followed a division of opinion in the alliance. The Railwaymen's Union and the Transport Workers' Union cancelled the strike with the result that the Miners' Federation was forced to strike single-handed. On April 15, the so-called 'Black Friday', the coal-miners were finally defeated, and the 'Tripple Alliance' went down to pieces by the betrayal of other

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(6) About the relation of the Whiteley Committee and British labour relations, Dr. Sidney Pollard: *History of Labor in Sheffield*, 1959, Liverpool is very useful, Cf. p. 274.

(7) G. D. H. Cole: *A History of the Labor Party from 1914-1948*, p. 108f.

two unions.

The failure of the 'Tripple Alliance' was a terrible shock to the British labor movement. Heavily overburdened with the post-war crises, the British industries suffered a mass unemployment. The ideological radicalization of the labor movement through the influence of the Russian Revolution, the revival of syndicalism and the formation of the British Communist Party and the loose amalgamation of craft unions, all these tended toward putting industrial unions on to a wider basis.<sup>(8)</sup>

Behind these social currents, Lenin's thought of Bolshevism, syndicalism and gild socialism gradually infiltrated among the working people, and developed the movement for the National Building Gild. Under these conditions, the Amalgamated Engineering Union combined with the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and some smaller craft unions in 1921. Also such large-scale general unions as the Transport and General Workers' Union and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers were formed respectively in 1922 and 1924. With growing importance of these general unions, ILP, the relations between the left wing within the labor Party and the British Communist Party became intricate through the policies of T.U.C.

As was already mentioned, it is true in case of Great Britain too that the post-war social confusion and the economic destitution caused a revolutionary agitation, but what characterized most the labor movement there at that time was the organization problem involving the contradictions among the unions, and the relation between the trade union movement and the political parties, that is, which faction—the political parties or the unionists—should take the leadership and what personal relationships there existed among them and thus the trade union movement couldn't be a significant issue. After all the trade union movement couldn't be the pioneer of a revolution, establishing itself as a conciliatory agent in the capitalistic society. Thus the connection between the labor movement and the socialist party became close, showing as a historical fact that the trade union movement cannot be the lever of a socialist revolution in Europe after World War I.

More interesting, however, was the case of Germany in her post-war labor movement. At the closing period of World War I, that is, in January 1917, strikes occurred at Leipzig and Braunschweig as the anti-war campaign. Also, the large scale strikes of 200,000 and 300,000 metal workers were put up in April, 1917. At last, the general strike was started on November 9, 1918, ever deepening the crisis of Germany, but the fatal blow to the German Empire was the revolt of the sailors at Kiel, a naval port.

Of the Berlin workers that played the decisive role in the German Revolution, the most spectacular was the role played by the revolutionary stewards (revolutionäre Obleute) led by Richard Müller. The revolutionary stewards intended to bring about a general uprising. Already the German metal workers held a

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(8) James Klugmann: *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Formation and Early Years*, Vol. I, 1919–1924, 1968, London, p. 13ff.

national conference at Cologne in July 1917, and the Revolution Committee was formed in October. The Revolutionary Stewards, 80 workers of Berlin, became the nucleus of this organization in which the Independents of the Empire and the Prussian Parliaments participated, and the Revolution Committee was convened in January 1918, where the effort to end the war was appealed to the working classes.<sup>(9)</sup> On January 27, 1918, Richard Müller convened the representative conference of 1,500 turners, and about 400,000 workers went on strike at Berlin. The representative conference elected from among workers, over which Müller presided, demanded the peace without annexations and indemnities and the democratization of the entire state organization beginning with the introduction of the universal, equal, direct and secret vote of all men and women of over twenty years of age for the Prussian Diet. It appointed the action committee of eleven members to which the Independent Social Democratic Party sent the 3 delegates, Haase, Ledebour and Dittmann. Ledebour was a favourite of the Berlin workers next to Liebknecht, and Dittman was the former trade unionist and an important person to the Revolution. The three SPD members were not on the active committee, because they were afraid of the oppression from the state authority. Under these circumstances the Independents and the Spartacus were the main leaders of the German Revolution as against the opportunism of the SPD.

In the course of Revolution, Scheidemann declared on November 9, 1918 the 'German Republic' which gave birth to the first SPD government. Prime Minister Ebert, fearing the influence of the sailors' riot at Kiel, declared the Social Democratic Government as against the Free Socialistic Republic of Germany, and tried to draw ISDP to his side, forestalling a Liebknecht's attack. He wanted to prevent the revolutionarization of the workers by having them enter the Cabinet of Independents which had influence over the revolutionary workers. The Independents entered the Cabinet in spite of a strong opposition from the Spartacus presenting a demand of six items as the compensation for their participation. A compromise of the Majority Social Democrats and the Independents was made in the following manner: the Cabinet was formed of six Commissars of the People, every Minister, that is, Commissar being placed under the control of the two representatives of the SPD and the Independents, and these Commissars were elected by the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils which were convened by the delegate conference of all German workers.

In December, 1918, however, the Socialists of the Independents seceded from the People's Commissar, protesting against the Cabinet's negative and hesitant policies, so the Cabinet became the SPD Government. During the three months from November 1918 to January 1919, some important labor and welfare legislations were legalized, for instance, the eight-hour day, the combination right of civil service employees, the duty to provide for the relief of the unemployed,

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(9) Rudolf Coper: *Failure of a Revolution, Germany in 1918-1919*, 1955, Cambridge, p. 61.

imposed upon the municipalities, and for the protection against the arbitrary dismissal by the employers. Nevertheless, the Independents and the Spartacus League advanced the slogan, "All Powers to the Workers' Councils." The Revolution of November 9, 1918 caught all wings of German workers by surprise, and along with the revolt, the Soldiers' and Workers' Councils were organized everywhere at the front, factories, workshops etc. after the pattern of the Soviet in the Russian Revolution.<sup>(10)</sup> They were obliged to be the promoters of the Revolution, and their relations to trade unions became very intricate. It was decided at the Mannheim Conference of 1906 that the executives of the trade unions and SPD would work together on the questions affecting their common interests, but after the split of SPD at the beginning of World War I, many trade union members shifted to the Independents, and the unions had to declare the political neutrality to avoid the involvement in the controversies between the socialist parties and other political groups. There is no question, therefore, that the Soldiers' and Workers' Councils greatly circumscribed the powers and privileges of the trade unions.

The delegate conference of 3,000 workers, which was held at Berlin, opened a vigorous discussion on the management of the Soldiers' and Workers' Councils. Its burning point centered around the question of the executive's membership. At first 14 members of Social Democrats and the Independents were chosen, the latter being the revolutionary stewards. After an intricate procedure among the majority socialists, Independents, Revolutionary Stewards and Spartacists, the Executive Councils of the Workers and Soldiers Councils finally settled down to have 40 members.<sup>(11)</sup>

In contrast to such a revolutionary organization of workers, the trade unions started on the task of reshaping of social and political institutions of Germany on November 15, 1918. Under the leadership of Legien for the unions on the one hand, and of Stinnes for the employers on the other, an agreement was reached on the central working committee between the employers and the trade unions (Zentral-arbeitsgemeinschaft), and the trade unions were given the freedom of complete association. At the same time, as soon as the practice of the joint consultation became generalized by the establishment of the conciliation committee, it worked as the stabilizer or in a way as a conservative element in the labor movement, counteracting against the revolutionary tendencies of the Soldiers' and Workers' Councils.

In 1920, the German trade unions performed their task in upholding the Weimar Republic deciding on the Weimar Republic in the Nuremberg Trade Union Congress, and on the re-organization of the free trade unions (die freie Gewerkschaften)

(10) Eric Waldman: *The Spartacist Uprising of 1919 and the Crisis of the German Socialist Movement, A Study of the Relation of Political Theory and Party Practice*, 1958, Wisconsin, pp. 47-48.

(11) *Geschichte der Deutschen Arbeiterbewegung in Acht Bänden*, Bd. 3, Von 1917 bis 1923, (Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, 1966, Berlin, SS. 87ff.

in July, 1919. The result was the replacement of the previous loose organization of the pre-World War I days, setting up the General German Federation of labor (Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund), and prescribing for its convention once in every three years. In these conventions such matters as the principle by which to orient the labour movement toward the industrially organized union and the problem of the works' councils around much controversy.

It was natural that the works' councils, being a sub-organization of trade unions, were counteracting against the Soliders' and Workers' Councils. In contrast to the spontaneous origin of the Soldiers' and Workers' Councils aiming at the transformation of the social institutions, the works' councils were a reorganized form of the traditional trade societies that were engaged in the improvement of labor conditions, wages, etc. at the request 'from above'. The factories with 20 or more workers were required to institute a council according to the Amendment to the Industrial Code of 1891. On December 23, 1918, the government issued the order that the setting-up of the works' council was compulsory for the factories and establishments of twenty or more workers, and soon afterwards the Weimar Constitution stipulated it definitely. And in order to facilitate the economic co-operation of the employers and the employees, the regional and the national councils were formed. And the national economic councils submitted the bills, involving economic problems to the federal government, on the basis of which the Works' Councils Act of February was enacted in 1920.

The Works' Councils Act was useful as a machinery for the promotion and the encouragement of industrial relations in the factories and the enterprises. In case, for example, when a dispute concerning a welfare scheme should come to no voluntary negotiation, it could be appealed to the conciliation board for the solution or be provided with some sort of working rules in its administration. The major task, however, of this Act was to vindicate the workers' right of the combination and enforce the collective agreement. It is true that the Works Councils Law could dangerously interfere with the management prerogatives, but on the other hand, the management participation did not let the works' councils to function too independently. Thus the works' councils could not satisfy the requirements of socialists and communists either. At the same time, they failed to nullify the conservative influence from trade unions.

From the foregoing, it is clear where lies the importance of the organization problem, that is, how significant is the relation between the revolutionary parties and the Social Democratic Party. For the post-war labor movement of Japan, the experiences of Britain and Germany proved very useful in the inquiry and the management of her industrial organization problem involving the trade union, the social party, etc. The failure of the February 1 General Strike, 1947 is significantly connected with there labour problem elements.

## III

The 'National Teachers Conference for the Minimum Living Standard' was held at the Fourth Elementary School, Yotsuya, Tokyo on October 18, 1946 and the delegates of 300,000 teachers assembled, demanding:

- (1) The payment of ¥600 a month as the minimum wage;
- (2) The abolition of the differential local rates of wages;
- (3) The abolition of the discriminatory pay by sex;
- (4) The payment of the 50 per cent of wages as the allowance for special district service;
- (5) The opposition against the unfair discharge;
- (6) The abolition of the 500 yen living wage framework;
- (7) The level-up to ¥1,500 a month with the income tax deducted.

Just about this time, that is, on October 26, 27, and 28, a conference of the trade unions of all the post office workers was held in Kyoto, and decided the following demands:

- 1) The establishment of the minimum wage according to the existing economic conditions;
- 2) The immediate conclusion of labour contract;
- 3) The adjustment of all discriminative treatments;
- 4) The promotion of abolishing the special post-office system;
- 5) The extension and the substantiation of welfare facilities.

Almost the same demands as the above were made by the National Conference of the State and the Public Employees' Trade Unions. Finding that the contents of their demands were very much the same as other public workers, and that their negotiating party was the government, they organized the Committee for the United Front of All Trade Unions of the State and Public Servants including the Trade Unions of All the Teachers. On December 2, the Committee announced a united campaign against the government, demanding several items. But the Government did not respond with sincerity, and so the United Front held the conference for defending the right of living, and each union appealed it to the Central Committee of Conciliation and Arbitration. Each union, however, repudiated the conciliatory plan, and the term of dispute was extended from the end of 1946 to the beginning of the following year. Meanwhile, the United Front, centering around the Socialist Party, launched out on the movement to overthrow the cabinet, culminating in the dissolution of the parliament, and in the condemnation of the reactionary nature of the Yoshida Cabinet. Further, the industrial unions (the unions of state and public servants), led by the Communistic Party, and all the unions, supported by the General Alliance of Trade Unions (*Sodomei*), requesting the level-up of wages, joined. Thus the scale of this campaign reached supposedly the greatest magnitude ever attained since the end of the war. Being advocated by the Trade Union Committee of the Socialist Party, there was organized on November 29 the Conference for the Trade Unions consisting of the Industrial

Unions Congress, the General Alliance of Trade Unions, the Trade Union of Nationalized Railway Servants, the Trade Unions of National Public and Municipal Workers and the *Toshiba*.

Soon under the co-sponsorship of this organization, the Peasants' Union and the Trade Union Committee of the Socialist Party held the National Conference for the Defence of the Living of Working Class and the Overthrow of Yoshida Cabinet. The government kept on strongly disregarding these vigorous protests. The Committee for an Extended Campaign by all the National and Public Servants had to be more aggressive against the obstinate policy of the Government. At last, they made the following demands in January 11, 1947, announcing that they would go on a general strike, if they should be rejected.

- 1) The establishment of a basic line of the minimum wage;
- 2) The immediate payment of the unpaid bonus;
- 3) The immediate conclusion of the labor contract;
- 4) The abolition of all the discriminative treatments;
- 5) The payment of an extra allowance for the cold area service;
- 6) The repeal of the labor Conciliation Law;
- 7) The repeal of the income tax on the working class;
- 8) A level-up of the exemption line for the total income tax;
- 9) The annulment of the repressive Imperial Ordinance, No. 591;
- 10) The opposition against the authoritative, repressive measures;
- 11) The withdrawal of the Premier's statement "the recalcitrant men" made at the New Year session;
- 12) The opposition to the unwarranted dismissal;
- 13) The payment of wages in cash.

Since the government made a very unsatisfactory reply to them, the decision for a general strike was proclaimed on January 18. And a grand all-out campaign consisting of 13 organizations with the participants as many as 2,000,000 while the Committee for the Co-operative Campaign of All the Trade Unions as represented in the National Conference for the Trade Unions, was set up on January 15.

These organizations came together with the object to set up a united front of the civilian workers as well as the government, public and municipal workers. Thus a general strike looked bound to come.

Meanwhile, the United Campaign Committee of the National Trade Unions of non-official workers took shape aiming at the formation of a united front with the government, public and municipal workers, and contributed much to inculcate the common objective and enhance the fighting spirit of the working classes towards the February 1 General Strike, while the government issued the statement, U.C.C., protesting against such a movement. Seeing the urgency of the situation and the inevitability of a general strike, the government requested a conciliation at the Central Committee of Conciliation and Arbitration for the first time, but the plan was refused. On January 29, the third conciliation plan was presented to



the both sides. And at the moment when U. C. C. appeared like refusing it, General MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the allied Powers, suddenly issued the order to suspend the General Strike of February 1, causing a great shock to the working class. General MacArthur objected to the general strike for the reason that such an act instigated by a small number of radicals would fatally interfere with the economic reconstruction of Japan, and seriously disturb the living of the ordinary Japanese. At last, Yashiro Ii, Chairman of the U. C. C. Committee, broadcasted at 2:30, January 31, the order to suspend the general strike all over the country. However, he protested: "This does not mean the renunciation of the right to dispute or strike by the working people for the attainment of their objective, although they have been forced by the G.H.Q. to suspend the strike this time." No matter whatever the reason, the February 1 General Strike succumbed to the policy of the Occupation Army.

#### IV

Why was it that the February 1 General Strike, 1947, failed. The year from March, 1946 to February, 1947 corresponded with the second stage of the Japanese labor movement under the Occupation Forces, as was indicated before. The helplessness of the defeated ruling class, the destructive inflation and the extremely distressed working people after World War II caused the masses to rise in demonstration of their complaints everywhere. Taking advantage of the situation, the Japanese Communist Party came forward with its party reconstruction programme.

On December 13, 1945, the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party made the following basic decisions on trade unionism<sup>(12)</sup>; (1) the strong and united action of the working class and the necessary conditions for the development of the trade union movement should take the left-wing stand, (2) the formation, if necessary, of a single industrial union, taking into consideration the various and specific conditions of every factory or area, as a transitory one for the national industrial union to be formed in future.

The interesting thing to be noted here in the attempt by the Japanese Communist Party to organize trade union was centered about the idea to form the national and single industrial union on the principle of 'one union for one enterprise.' This was certainly oriented towards the European way of the trade union organization. The trade union in an enterprise, however, trying to defend the living conditions of the Japanese workers after the war, was a spontaneous organization which was rather adverse to the normal development of trade unionism. It was very much like the 'works' committee.

Under the leadership of the Japanese Communist Party, the Industrial Union Congress of Japan was set up in 1946. The nucleus of this Congress, however, was the Trade Union Conference of Kanto Area, which was composed of the de-

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(12) *The Labor Year Book*, 1949, edited by Ohara Institute for Social Research, (the Japanese edition) pp. 78ff.

legates of factory operatives. Being an all embracing employees organization, it was more an enterprise union in nature than the industrial union.

The general movement, however, of the enterprise unions of the Industrial Union Congress of Japan tended toward the industrial union under the leadership of the Japanese Communist Party in opposition to the G.H.Q. policies as against the revolutionary trade union's campaign with reference to food stuffs.

Here G.H.Q. took a repressive measure against the labour movement in the name of 'anti-communism,' as was mentioned before. In other words, the direct cause for the failure of the February Strike was the authoritative, repressive posture against the labor movement which was aiming at the security of the minimum living for the working masses.

Here is an interesting question to be asked: "What would have happened with G.H.Q., if the course of events should have let the radicals wage a General Strike." Of course, G.H.Q. would have made an utmost effort to prevent the emergence of a People's Government, resorting to some thoroughgoing repressive measures.

The most important point to be considered in this connection is how the labor movement then would have responded? One can easily conjecture it from what happened in Britain and Germany after World War I. For example, in Britain even when the War was still going on, the labour movement known as the shop-steward movement, and in Germany, the revolutionary stewards, launched a vigorous protesting movement against the despotic policies of the government, as was previously explained.

In Japan, however, not only the labor movement as an organized activity was wiped out since 1937, but the anti-war movement had a very weak and ineffective influence over the working masses.<sup>(13)</sup> Such being the conditions, the labor movement after the war was merely a gift to the people by G.H.Q. 'from above.' So, the enterprise union which appeared one after another following the end of the war bore the resemblance for some time to the works' committee in Britain, and it had common features with the German labor movement such as demanding for industrial management and for the establishment of a management conference committee. Since these attempts, however, being confined within an enterprise, the spirit of industrial solidarity beyond that limits failed to develop.

Next, the question of the leaders and the rank and file who promoted the post-war labor movement in Japan will be considered. Generally, they were about 31-40 years old. Among the leaders, there were some who had had the 5 or 10 years experience as an employee of responsible position. Thus the union membership then was a mixed one of the so-called official employees and the rank and file.<sup>(14)</sup> Of course, the high ranking union leaders were those who participated

(13) Cf. "Labor Movement during the World War II," *The Labor Year Book of Japan*, special edition, compiled by Ohara Institute for Social Research, Hosei University, Tokyo, Japan. (Japanese edition)

(14) *The Conditions of the Post-war Trade Union Movement* by the Institute of Social Sciences of Tokyo University, 1950, p. 88 (Japanese edition)

in the pre-war labor movement and had such an experience of setting up craft unions.

The recruited post-war leaders had no knowledge of the pre-war trade union movement which was crushed by the oppressive laws, hence they were unable to appreciate the valuable traditions and accomplishments in pre-war days. They yielded after all to be satisfied with the organization of the enterprise union so as to escape from the overwhelming inflation and the general deterioration of living. Under these conditions of affairs, they could not afford to study the principles of trade union organization including the craft union and the industrial union.

Needless to say, the General Alliance of Trade Unions ranging over 17 industries with the aggregate of 1,630,000 enterprise union members was moving towards the formation of a complete industrial union in the cause of a united front through the so-called 'Aggressive October' campaign aiming at the establishment of the minimum wage.

Here occurred, however, an unexpected trouble—an enormous unbalance of power among the unions. In practice, it was very difficult to adjust between the ordinary workers' unions and the government, public and municipals servants' unions. While the former was generally the enterprise union, except for the Seamen's Union of Japan, an Industrial Union, the latter, almost all of them, were industrial unions. It is true that such a state of affairs could be submerged while fighting for a common cause and the sectionalism of enterprise unions might tend to be disregarded, but the unbalance in this case was too formidable.

The labor movement of Japan after February 1st, 1947 had to grapple with this hard task.

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