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BUNJI SUZUKI AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN TAISHO PERIOD (2)

by Katsunori Nakamura

In 1915, the American Federation of Labor (A. F. L.) invited some delegates of trade unions in Japan to their convention as observers. However, at this time Japanese government did not admit the workers to organize trade unions, and there was no trade union in Japan. As the result, the Yūaikai (Friendly Society) accepted the invitation of A. F. L. and sent their delegates to the convention.

Bunji Suzuki, the president of the Yūaikai, attended the 35th convention of A. F. L., which was opened on the 8th of November in 1915, by the support of Eiichi Shibuzawa and other prominent persons in Japan. This fact gave the impression that the Japanese government admitted the establishment of trade unions for the first time, to Bunji Suzuki and those who had the connection with the Yūaikai. After this, the Yūaikai increased their influence throughout Japan, and the organization of the society changed from that of promoting friendly relations among the workers to that of trade unions.

For some time after he left Japan for the United States, Suzuki talked about the class struggle between capitalists and workers. Before that, he had never talked about it. The facts that the Japanese workers gave him sincere support when he left Japan and that he found the well-organized workers in the United States, might have been the reason why he talked about the class struggle between capitalists and workers.
