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NEWSLETTER FROM ASIAN PACIFIC WORKERS' SOLIDARITY LINKS JAPAN

# Locked-out Korean Union Wins Major Victory against Japanese HQ

by Isu Nahoko

On December 9, 2000, a delegation from the Omron Korea Union, affiliated with the Korean Federation of Clerical and Financial Labour Unions (KCFLU) and KCTU, celebrated a massive victory in Tokyo. The company had broken a labour agreement with the union in an attempt to change it unilaterally, and responded to the union's demand to restore and keep the agreement by cracking down on the union and harrasing the union members. These were against the Korean Labour Laws, but the company just ignored repeated warnings from the Labour Administration. The union went on a strike in May 2000, and since then, some had tried to go back to work, but the company refused to have them back and withheld their wages. After two months, the company was made to pay up by an order from the Labour Administration, but unfair labour practices to the union members continued. With their members stopped unlawfully from going into some parts of the workplace, women members were threatened and harrassed, restricted or simply had their responsibilities at work taken away.

So, the union's last resort was to come to Japan to demand that the parent company take responsibility and do something about it. After all, Omron Korea is a 100% subsidiary of Omron, Japan. The first delegation arrived in Japan on November 15, and started a propaganda campaign straight away. The company retaliated by locking out the union members on the following day. The union was determined to stand firm and decided to send a second delegation on November 27. The delegation received full support from the National Union of General Workers and other citizen's groups against the Japan Korea Investment Agreement, while the Japan Electrical, Electronic and Information Union (JEEIU), a member of Rengo (JTUC) to which Omron Japan's union is affiliated to, kept its distance saying the dispute should not be linked to the campaign against the Japan-Korea Investment Agreement, which is aimed at "protecting" foreign capital in Korea from the Korean labour movement.

Unions, including the All Japan Dockworkers' Union, All Japan Construction Workers' Union and Zenrokyo labor federation unions turned up to show support in daily protest actions in front of Omron's head office in Kyoto. The company locked up all the doors, which made it extremely inconvenient for their clients as well as their own employees! The delegation and supporters sang Korean workers' songs and shouted slogans. Many of the delegation members



Japan-Korea joint victory meeting held in Kyoto.

spoke good Japanese, so they handled the slogans, banners and negotiations with the authorities themselves. The pressure was so big that it became unbearable for the company quite quickly.

On December 1, a message from JEEIU was sent to Seoul asking for a negotiation at Omron's Tokyo Head Office. On December 5, a negotiation team from KCFLU/KCTU flew in from Seoul to join the delegation. The negotiations took a peculiar form: while Omron negotiators stayed in a separate room, a messenger from JEEIU came in and out of the room delivering messages! Still, it was a total victory for the union - the company is to apologise for breaking the labour agreement, and the original labour agreement

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# Delayed Justice Done: The settlement of the Hanaoka forced labor case

By Kawami Kazuhito



*Meeting with survivors and family members of the victims in Beijing, December 2000.*

I am proud to report the out of court settlement of the Hanaoka copper mine case to the APWSL members with whom we fought together to support the Hotel & Restaurant Employees Union Local 11 from Los Angeles several years ago.

## *The settlement of the Hanaoka case*

11 Chinese workers had filed a suit at the Tokyo High Court against the contracting firm Kajima for compensation for wartime forced industrial labor at the Hanaoka mines. On November 29, 2000, an out of court settlement was reached based on the following points. 1) The plaintiffs and the defendant reaffirm the joint statement on July 5, 1990 in which Kajima admitted its corporate responsibility for forced conscription of labor at the Hanaoka mines and apologized. 2) Kajima agrees to establish a 500 million yen fund (approximately US\$4.5 million), called the Hanaoka Peace and Friendship Fund, to be administered by the Chinese Red Cross. 3) The purpose of the Fund is to commemorate the victims and to support the livelihood of the survivors and family members of the victims. 4) The recipients of the Fund are not only the 11 plaintiffs but all the 986 victims and survivors. 5) The steering board of the Fund will be constituted by representatives of the plaintiffs, the Chinese Red Cross and also members from Kajima if they wish to join.

## *What is the Hanaoka case?*

At the end of World War II, 40,000 Chinese workers were conscripted by Japanese Government orders to work at 135 work-sites in Japan and 7,000 of them lost their lives. Especially at the Hanaoka copper mine in Akita Prefecture, Kajima treated the workers like slaves and many of them were brutally killed. On June 30, 1945, the Chinese workers staged an uprising to defend their human dignity. The workers maintained discipline not to hurt Japanese common people. Out of the 986 workers conscripted at the Hanaoka mine, 418

lost their lives, including 138 who died after August 15, 1945, when the war ended. After the war, Kajima was found guilty at the war crimes trials held in Yokohama in 1948, but the sentence was commuted afterwards.

## *The progress of the struggle*

In 1989, the survivors and the family members of the victims of the Hanaoka case sent an open letter to Kajima asking for an apology, construction of a Memorial hall and reparation. The following year, on July 5, both parties signed a joint statement, in which Kajima accepted its responsibility and apologized and promised to settle the case through negotiation. But the negotiations failed, so the Chinese workers filed a suit at the Tokyo District Court in 1995. In December 1997, the plaintiffs lost the case and appealed to the Tokyo High Court. In September 1999, the court recommended an out of court settlement. After the plaintiffs took the case to the court, support for them grew world-wide. An APWSL affiliate in Taiwan, the Labor Rights Association, gave strong support for the case. Also, the Hotel & Restaurant Employees Union (HERE) Local 11 was trying to organize workers at the Hotel New Otani in Los Angeles, where Kajima was the main stake holder. HERE Local 11 argued that because Kajima did not settle its wrong doings 50 years ago, it is still discriminating the minority workers at the Hotel New Otani and the union. A joint struggle against Kajima was waged across the Pacific Ocean. Many unions and citizens' groups protested at the Kajima Head Office in Tokyo and petitioned to the Tokyo High Court.



*Kawami Kazuhito at the report-back meeting on the settlement in Tokyo, December 17, 2000*

## *Delayed justice done*

Major newspapers widely reported the settlement of the case and helped raise public recognition of not only the Hanaoka case but also of other post war reparation cases. This settlement of the Hanaoka case has great significance and I would like to point out just three major aspects of it. 1. The cause of the Hanaoka uprising to defend human dignity was taken up again in the open letter of 1989, and finally realized in this settlement of 2000. And also the first apology from a company which engaged in forced conscription came

# Kokuro Rank & File Lose Vote to Oppose Political Party Solution, Struggle Carries On

by Yamasaki Seiichi

The reopening meeting of the annual general meeting of Kokuro, the Japan National Railway Workers' Union, which was shut down last year due to rank and file protest, was held on January 27. It was a very cold day and snowing heavily in Tokyo. The venue of the meeting, the Socialist Democratic Party Headquarters, was surrounded and protected by a force of riot police one thousand strong. Most of the dismissed workers' groups and their supporters were blocked entry into the building by the riot police. Only a few selected media people were allowed to enter the venue hall, and pictures were not allowed to be taken after the meeting started. A union meeting protected by riot police: this extraordinary scene symbolized what was going to happen. Kokuro could not come to a conclusion on approving the four political party agreement for the settlement of the 1047 dismissed workers at the previous three meetings held last year. This time, the leadership of Kokuro was determined to push through the four-party agreement and this determination was shown by the presence of the riot police. During the debate, only two opposition delegates were allowed to speak from the floor. The ballot to approve the four party agreement and to exempt the Japan Railway companies from their legal responsibilities for the dismissal was finally taken. The result was Yes 78, No 40, Abstention 1 and Invalid 2. After the ballot, all the seven executive committee members resigned and a new executive committee headed by the new President, Takashima Shoichi, was elected. Turmoil within the Kokuro union since the four party agreement came out last May seemed to have come to an end, but this is not the case. The negotiations with the JR companies



*Dismissed Kokuro members and supporters protesting police intervention.*

for the settlement of the dismissals may start, but is hardly likely to "reach a satisfactory solution for the parties" as stated in the ILO recommendation issued on November 17 2000. Offers for the settlement on rehiring and compensation money prepared by the JR companies are wide apart from the dismissed workers' demands. Just after the Kokuro reopening meeting on January 27, 20 local dismissed workers groups out of 36 issued a joint statement to continue their struggle till all the dismissed workers get reinstatement. No matter what the Kokuro union says, as long as the dismissed workers themselves are willing to fight, the struggles of the National Railways work-

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from Kajima in 1990, but this was also realized by the settlement 10 years later. 2. A good settlement was made in spite of the initial defeat at court. This was due to the hard struggles of the survivors and family members of the victims, as well as that of the attorneys, the Sino-Japanese friendship movement and international support from the unions and citizens' groups. 3. There were 11 plaintiffs, but through the involvement of the Chinese Red Cross, the recipients of the settlement were all the 986 survivors and victims. Also, the Chinese Government supported the settlement, thereby restoring the honor of the survivors of the forced conscription in China.

## *International movement for post war reparations from Japan*

Several court cases for apology and reparation of conscription and force labor against Japanese corporations have been settled out of court, such as the Shinjittetsu, Nippon Kokan, Fujikoshi and Kashima case. But the Japanese government has failed to admit its responsibility, unlike in Germany, where a reparation fund for the survivors of forced labor was set up in the summer of 2000. In the United States, there are many class actions against Japanese corporations from the

survivors of forced conscription and forced labor. The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations issued a report on the Forced Labor Convention 1930 in March this year. The report on Japan in paragraph 12 requests the Japanese Government "to provide additional information on this ( i.e., Hanoaka ) case." And in paragraph 16, it says, "In view of the age of the victims, and the rapid passage of time, the Committee again expresses the hope that the Government will be able to respond to claims of these persons in a way which is satisfactory both to the victims and to the Government. "This is a criticism of the argument by the Japanese Government that reparation of forced labor is already settled by the San Francisco Peace Treaty and other bilateral treaties.

The Network to support reparation cases of Japanese corporations is planning a signature campaign to implement the ILO recommendations. I ask for your support for our struggle to hold the corporations and the Japanese government responsible for forced conscription and forced labor.

*Kawami Kazuhito is a member of the Support Group for the Hanoaka Case and also a member of APWSL Japan. This article was translated by Yamasaki Seiichi.*

# Abuses of Foreign Trainees Linked to Political Scandal in Japan

Kawakami Sonoko

Abuses of foreign trainees under a government system which has been massively expanded in the 1990s took the spotlight at this year's 9th annual Joint Day of Action for the Rights and Livelihoods of Foreign Workers, held in Tokyo on March 5. One reason was the timing: earlier this year a political scandal erupted concerning illegal political donations to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) by the parent company of an agency proven to have violated the rights of economically exploited foreign trainees.

Thus, the first demonstration site was in front of IMM Japan, the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises International Human Resources Development Corporation. Its President is a former KSD (Foundation for Promoting the Welfare of Independent Entrepreneurs) President who is now under arrest for the KSD cash-for-favors scandal involving donations of more than 700 million yen to former LDP House of Councillors member and Labor Minister, Masakuni Murakami, who is also under arrest. Many of the trainees at IMM Japan are from Indonesia and the Japan Indonesia NGO Network (JANNI) has found out that trainees passport were illegally withheld from them last fall so that they could not escape oppressive working conditions or change jobs and they were not paid for regular overtime work, especially in the first year when their labor is recognized only as on the job training. Also, companies such as IMM often do not issue account balances for the regular savings which are made for trainees or even certificates of completion of the training program. There is an overall atmosphere of no open information about the trainees working conditions.

A second demonstration was held outside the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO), a semi-governmental organization created to facilitate the importation of foreign trainees. It is responsible for the expansion of the trainee system in the 1990s, which seems to be a way to import cheap labor but does not fulfill its obligation to teach the latest skills and technology to workers from developing countries. If the trainees themselves protest their working conditions, they are often just sent back home. The enforcement system of rules for workplaces accepting trainees is ineffective and bureaucrats overseeing such programs should be held accountable for abuses of the system.

## *Background to the IMM Japan /KSD Scandal*

Last October, KSD hit the front pages of the major dailies, under suspicions of irregular accounting. It was said that it had established a voluntary organization (KSD Homeikai, a support network providing various services to KSD members), which apparently had made contributions to and bribed a certain political parties, indirectly as well as directly. Scandals were revealed one after another, until the case of IMM Japan came to light. IMM was established in December 1991, and began to receive technical trainees in April

1993 from Indonesia. With the support of politicians, Homeikai lobbied the ministries and agencies concerned to deregulate the foreign trainees receiving system, while IMM Japan itself was authorized by the Ministry of Labor as a nonprofit foundation. Homeikai stated in the founding prospectus that receiving foreign trainees would be a solution to the shortage of labor for independent entrepreneurs. IMM Japan is thus the leading recipient organization. In 1998, it received roughly 6,000 technical trainees and interns from Indonesia. It also started to receive trainees and interns from Thailand in March 2000.

## *The Reality of Technical Training*

One cannot say that IMM Japan is free from controversy just because it is a nonprofit foundation under the control of the Ministry of Labor. It is equivalent, more or less, to other organizations which receive technical trainees from China and Vietnam. Technical trainees receive wages and allowances in the following manner: The member company pays a registration fee of 200,000 and a monthly fee of ¥20,000 to IMM Japan [Ed: US\$1=¥123 on 3/23/01]. In addition, it pays another ¥180,000 per trainee. Of this sum, the trainee receives ¥80,000 as a training allowance per month, of which ¥10,000 is put aside to be delivered to the trainee after returning to his or her home country, as business incentive money. The rest is paid to IMM Japan itself as a preliminary training fee, and to cover return air tickets fares and insurance premiums. The recipient company deducts income taxes, social insurance premiums and labor insurance premiums from their basic wages (amounting to ¥135,000 to ¥150,000) before paying a sum to IMM Japan for each technical intern amounting to ¥90,000 for the first year and ¥100,000 for the second year on a take-home basis. Of this, IMM Japan pays a monthly salary of ¥75,000 to each technical intern for the first year and ¥55,000 the second year, of which ¥20,000 is taken out as business incentive money. A simple calculation tells us that IMM Japan receives a management fee of about ¥2,210,000 per trainee from the member company during the three-year period, while the company pays out ¥7,000,000 or more. Incidentally, Mr. Koseki, the IMM Japan President now under arrest, received from a director's remuneration of ¥30,000,000 per year. Each technical trainee had to put aside a monthly ¥20,000 from the training allowance and wages in the name of "business incentive money." The technical trainees were forced to sign papers to this effect prepared by IMM Japan. They were not allowed to refuse. Thus, each technical trainee or intern was able to get ¥60,000 for the first year, ¥70,000 for the second, and ¥80,000 for the third year on a take-home basis. Savings by technical interns were abolished, however in September 1999 due to violations of Article 18 (Ban on Compulsory Saving) in the Labor Standards Law.

### Confiscated Passports

All the trainees were forced to sign a written request asking IMM Japan to keep their passports. Although IMM's claim was that this policy aimed at preventing them from losing them, it seems clear that it was done to prevent trainees from running away. In fact, there were some trainees who asked their recipient companies to return their passports, saying that they would keep them by themselves. However, these requests were denied because the companies feared that they would disappear.

It is also difficult to say that training has been given in a proper manner by the recipient companies. Little attention is paid, from the outset, to the selection of type of job by the trainee. Rather, the trainees are allocated according to the recipient company's needs. One trainee was allocated to a construction site, and expected to do everything: dig holes, lay blocks, cut the grass or plow. At factories, it is common for a trainee to do nothing more than assembly line operations (keep pressing a button, apply tape to lumber). One trainee, during his first year, cut grass for three weeks along a railway from morning till night because there was no work at the construction site. Finding this ridiculous, he complained to IMM Japan, which finally transferred him to another company.

#### "Be Patient..."

It seems there have been some changes in the foreign trainees who come to Japan over the past eight years since IMM Japan started receiving them. In the early days, many trainees came in the hope of mastering techniques, while working without much knowledge of the circumstances. Not a few, however, returned home feeling cheated and deeply disappointed, as they had come only to find low-waged unskilled work waiting for them, and had learned nothing.

Recently, the situation seems to be changing. Because of what they hear from returnees or because of the economic crises at home, many trainees come to Japan with a vague hope that things will be better once they arrive, since Japan is reported as a technologically advanced country. They care little about the type of work. ¥80,000 or ¥90,000 is big money for Indonesians, and it may be natural that they think of it this way. Most of these trainees are surprised to find, after arriving in Japan, that the cost of living is much higher than they expected, and the allowances they get are much lower than those of Japanese workers wages or even those of overstaying foreign workers at the same workplace.

Nevertheless, they may be satisfied to be able to get ¥100,000 to ¥150,000 per month when they work overtime. There are many cases, however, where trainees do not get paid overtime simply because they are trainees. This happens more often if they are in their first

year. Some trainees complained that even when they got paid for overtime work, they were paid ¥500 per hour, a lower level than the minimum wage, or said that the company did not make it clear on what basis it calculated their overtime wages. In some cases, overtime is paid in the form of a small present.

Despite these circumstances, however, IMM Japan has not done anything to improve the situation. "IMM Japan always tells us to be patient. There is no point even in complaining to them," reports one trainee. There are, among trainees and interns, some who asked IMM Japan to transfer them to another recipient company but who were eventually deported. It may be that trainees or interneers are too afraid to complain for fear of deportation. One trainee recently asked JANNI never to disclose his name or his recipient company, although he had a lot of complaints about unpaid overtime work and deductions from his allowances on some pretext or other.

#### Hope for Improvement?

Many media organizations, including the national broadcasting association (NHK), have reported on IMM Japan in association with the KSD scandals, and it has been taken up for discussion at the Labor, Legal Affairs and Cabinet Committees Sessions at the Diet. IMM Japan was consequently obliged to stop keeping the passports of trainees/interns and to force them to make compulsory savings. Many issues remain unsolved and may surface later, however, in terms of the actual conditions of training/internship and wages. In addition, IMM Japan may devise another means to prevent trainees/interns from running away. We must continue to keep watch on the situation and fully review the foreigners' training system that led to the establishment of such an organization as IMM Japan.

*Kawakami Sonoko is a member of JANNI, the Japan-Indonesia NGO Network. This article was translated by staff of the National Network in Solidarity with Migrant Workers and edited and revised by John McLaughlin.*



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is to be restored, compensation of 5 months' wages to be paid to all union members, rights for union activities to be fully recognised, and the workers won a 12% pay rise!

That the Korean workers, with the solidarity from the workers in Japan, won such a landslide victory on this front is especially significant at this time, when the Korean and Japanese Governments are discussing Japan-Korean Investment Agreement, which is an attempt to restrict the labour movement in Korea to en-

able Japanese bosses milk the profit without worrying about the workers' rights. The idea of the Investment Agreement came about exactly because the Japanese bosses are feeling the threat of the Korean labour movement. Let this victory be a lesson to them, and let this victory a step for us to fight back in international solidarity against any attempt to cut back on the workers' rights.

*Isu Nahoko compiled and translated this article from recent reports in Rodo Joho. She is an editorial committee member based in Osaka.*

# Observations from my visit to Japan

by Stephanie Luce

I had the good fortune to spend 12 days in Japan in February 2001, meeting with trade unionists, women's group activists, scholars and students. The Center for Transnational Labor Studies (CTLS) sponsored my trip so that I could present some of my research on the U.S. Living Wage movement and the challenges of building labor-community coalitions at two CTLS seminars. In addition, CTLS organizers arranged for me to talk about the living wage movement at the Rengo Tokyo and Rengo Osaka spring meetings, to meet with Jichiro organizers in Osaka, and to present other work on organizing low-wage women workers at the Asian Women Worker's Center in Tokyo. Finally, I was able to meet with professors and graduate students at Hitotsubashi University to talk about the concept of the Labor Center as well as university-based movements like the anti-sweatshop movement in the U.S.

It is difficult to easily summarize all that I learned in Japan, and after only a short time there it would be easy for me to misinterpret what I saw. However, my strongest observation was that despite our differences, the Japanese and American labor markets and labor movements are becoming more and more similar. Whether this is due to general globalization of our economies, or our similar political programs that have both countries following neo-liberal agendas, is not clear. What does seem clear is that important trends hold true for both countries: While there are many differences between our economies and labor histories, the labor movement in both countries faces declining membership, weakening political power, privatization and employer threats of moving overseas. In some cases, it is the same multi-nationals threatening workers in both countries. In both countries, there remains a strong wage gap between male and female workers. This has been improving more rapidly in the U.S., but is by no means eliminated. Women workers in both countries struggle with the best means for fighting workplace and wage discrimination: unions, legislation, women's organizations, or some combination of these strategies. It was exciting to meet so many activists in Japan, both women and men, who were concerned about this issue, at a time when the national women's movement in the U.S. is not as strong.

Both countries are also facing an increase in the contingent workforce. While 'contingent workforce' has somewhat different meanings in the two countries, the overall result is the same: a growing group of workers face low-wages, low job security, too many or too few hours of work, and no or few benefits. This group has grown even in times of general economic prosperity, resulting in growing wage inequality. In addition, both labor movements must work hard to change their culture and organize new groups of workers. Even though I knew before coming that the Japanese labor movement is male-dominated, I was surprised to see the sea of male faces at the Rengo meetings. But I did meet young women on the staff of the gender-equality department in Rengo, who are working to transform the current union culture. Although the U.S. labor movement appears to be ahead of Japan in this regard, in both places there is still much work to do to make the unions more welcoming to younger people, women,

and workers of different backgrounds.

Finally, it seems that in both labor movements there is a struggle and need to overcome past political differences. This is not to suggest that differences be forgotten or ignored.

In fact, currently in the U.S. there is pressure by some groups for

the AFL-CIO to open up its books to be clear about the activities of its International Affairs Department and collaboration with the CIO. Information about past political disputes must be public information. But there is also a need to find a path toward reconciliation, so that unionists can work together in rebuilding the labor movement in their countries.

In conclusion, I was delighted to meet with the CTLS staff and members, as well as activists from the other organizations, universities and unions. It seems that the diverse crowds that met at the CTLS seminars represent the opening for rebuilding the labor movement in Japan: unionists, scholars, and activists who want to build labor-community coalitions and a new kind of labor movement that is inclusive and creative. The union organizers I met who are interested in the living wage movement represent the hope for unions to fight trends in privatization and pursue new strategies for organizing workers. And it seems that this group of labor activists, who are such keen scholars of the movements in other countries, have much to teach U.S. labor leaders that must be pushed to build a global labor movement and learn from workers abroad. I am excited about the possibility of a living wage movement developing in Japan. U.S. Living Wage activists that I have told about my visit are eager to see this movement spread across borders. We remain ready to offer support in whatever way we can, to help make this movement for living wages a global reality.



Stephanie Luce at the CTLS seminar on February 10, 2001.

Stephanie Luce is an Assistant Professor at the Labor Center, University of Massachusetts.

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ers will not come to an end. The struggling dismissed workers groups have already started to fight back. On March 7, they sent a delegate to Geneva to hand additional information on the Kokuro case to the Committee on Freedom of Association, ILO. The approval of the four-party agreement was a defeat for Kokuro dismissed members, but, as one Kokuro member predicted in this newsletter (No.36), the worst outcome may be the starting point for a new struggle.

Yamasaki Seiichi is editor of the APWSL JAPAN English newsletter.



The 2nd APWSL Japan seminar series

## Solidarity and Hope Shared Beyond Borders

by Sakakibara Hiromi

APWSL Japan held the first seminar of its second year of public seminars on international labor issues in Tokyo on Saturday, March 17. The title of this talk was "Migrant Workers in Japan under the Wave of Globalization: The Case of Women Workers from the Philippines and Latin America." Two women, Lenny P. Tolentino, who is a staff member of the Philippine Desk of the Yokohama Diocese' Solidarity Center for Migrants and Keiko Tanahara, who is the staff member of the Latin America Desk, came to share their experiences and thoughts based on their activities over the past several years, which include consultations by telephone, handling and managing cases, education/consciousness-raising, organizing/community building, advocacy, lobbying and networking. About 30 people participated, more than we had expected, and the audience was very eager.



Lenny Tolentino lives in Kotobuki section of Yokohama, which is known for its large foreign population, and has dealt with problems of Filipina women for ten years. She told about the case of a young woman which

*Lenny Tolentino speaking about Filipinas in Japan.*

is unfortunately rather typical of other Filipinas in Japan. Their lives are destroyed by globalization in the Philippines, so they dream of better lives by going to Japan, but in Japan they face many difficulties. The worsening economy in Japan has made their situation more serious. Various consultations made Lenny think about ways in which they are able to help themselves, and empower themselves. Such activities made them grow. Her conclusion was that the present day migrants from the Philippines are all victims and survivors of globalization. In this process, they are "economically necessary but socially undesirable". We should create better alternatives for them.

Keiko Tanahara went to Peru from Okinawa in 1964 when she was 10. In 1990, she came back to Japan with a husband and 2 children. She is Japanese and a migrant worker, and now she is an activist for returning migrants from Latin America in Japan. She has come to understand the structure of the world economy, and she observes the lives of migrants. Her perspective is very important for Japanese to hear and for the labor movement in Japan. I expect that a multi-cultural movement will arise in Japanese labor unions. I think that the audience got some valuable insights from the two speakers.

*Sakakibara is an editorial committee member.*

*Keiko Tanahara from Peru speaking about the problems of Latin American workers of Japanese descent who have returned to Japan.*



## Message from the outgoing editor

by Yamasaki Seiichi

This is the first edition of the APWSL JAPAN in the 21st century, and also the last to be edited by the present editors in Tokyo. From the next issue, APWSL JAPAN will be edited and published by APWSL Japan members in Osaka area headed by Kitahata Yoshihide.

APWSL JAPAN was first published in June 1990, just after the set up of APWSL Japan. I was one of the editors from its beginning, and have been involved in the writing, rewriting and editing for all the 11 years. One of the difficulties I had in making this English newsletter was the lack of good translators into English. So we always had to rely on native English speakers to check and rewrite the article. I want to thank all the people who helped us, but I especially want to thank John McLaughlin, for he joined the editorial board with us and also helped us for the longest period.

Another difficulty was to find news sources and to have articles which are understandable and informative to the readers abroad. I don't think we have managed to overcome this difficulty yet. So the news covered on this newsletter is still limited to what is happening around our members and does not cover all

Japanese workers. But still, this newsletter never failed to send out information and voices of the grass roots workers in Japan for 11 years. It is not a small accomplishment for a small organization like APWSL Japan, that does not have an office nor a single staff person. I am proud to have taken part in it. I want to thank two members who were committed to the making of our newsletter. Takahei-san did all the layout except the first few issues, and Nakahara-san did all the printing except the last two issues.

I will hand-over now to Kitahata-san and in turn I will be in charge of the Japanese quarterly bulletin "Links." I hope the readers will support Kitahata-san by continuing to read and give input to APWSL JAPAN.

*Keep expanding the links of APWSL  
by Takahei Masahito*

When the APWSL Japan Committee was established in June 1990, Suzuki Kazuo was elected as a representative and I was elected as the general secretary and also the editor of the English News. The APWSL English news had already been published for a while before Japan Committee was established. So, I was technically the first editor of the second period of APWSL Japan. 11 years have passed since 1990. As this issue is No.38, we can tell that the English news has been published almost quarterly for 11 years.

Among the APWSL member countries to whom English is foreign language, there are few who have been able to continue their English publications. We are

happy to see that APWSL Korea recently began to publish their English news. Although we think it is a barrier for us that the common language is English, we need to use English to communicate with people overseas. We have got many suggestions, support and encouragement from overseas APWSL members when we are facing new problems which had already occurred in their countries.

When we had made a motion against the program to develop phosphorus mining in Sri Lanka last year, we did not feel that the problem was in a different world, because we remembered the APWSL members of Sri Lanka we have met and could talk about it with them. We must expand further the links of APWSL in Japan, in order to maintain that the Japanese are an Asian people.

*Parting Message from a Former Editor:*

by John McLaughlin

As I finish editing my last set of articles for an APWSL Japan newsletter, I feel a little relief and a lot of nostalgia for the past six years of rather frantic proofreading and rewriting three or four times a year.

Even as a foreigner based in Japan for the past 11 years, the English newsletter has been a good primer for learning more about the Japanese labor movement. But what has kept me on the editorial committee for so long is my admiration for many Japanese APWSL members who are so dedicated to grassroots, independent workers' exchange and solidarity and all the interesting people I have met over the years at APWSL meeting and events. APWSL gave me my initial encounters with the Japanese labor movement, and participating in this group has truly enriched my experience in Japan.

For the past few years, as I entered a doctoral course, my English teaching career stabilized and my union organizing among foreign workers took off, my main APWSL activity has been limited to this newsletter, so I will really miss this connection. With my wife now working at the University of Michigan, I plan to join her back in the USA next spring. I hope that through the international labor networks I have come in contact with through APWSL, I can still remain in touch with Japanese and other overseas labor groups and activists.

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