

# APWSL JAPAN

APWSL-JAPAN

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Hoei Bldg. 8F 3-10, Kanda-Jinbocho,  
Chiyodaku, Tokyo, Japan

Phone :81-3-3288-2193 Fax. :81-3-3288-3809

E mail: apwsljp@jca.apc.org

Home Page : http://www.jca.apc.org/~apwsljp/

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NEWSLETTER FROM ASIAN PACIFIC WORKERS' SOLIDARITY LINKS JAPAN

## Report of 10th AGM of APWSL Japan

# Strengthening ties with APWSL Korea

by Kitahata Yoshihide

APWSL Japan held its 10th Annual General Meeting in Tokyo on July 17-18. The main theme was creating inormsî for workers' exchange programs. About thirty members participated.

Since last year, we have been discussing this theme based on our experience of the Thai/Japan and NZ/Japan exchange programs. This year, APWSL Japan supported an excellent exchange program of post office workers from NZ and Japan. Although this program was planned and organized by post office workers themselves, the role of APWSL Japan was very important. We have also begun discussion on the fourth East Asia Exchange Program of APWSL. Our past experiences and the discussions at the last Council Meeting at Colombo should be integrated in the preparation of the fourth East Asia Exchange Program.

At the National Executive Meeting held in March, APWSL Japan decided to invite Ms. Lee Sung Kyung, Coordinator for East Asia Sub-region, from Korea in order to strengthen our ties with the Korean national group. She agreed to attend our AGM and two other activists from Korea, Mr. Seo Sang Min (Yong Dong Po UIM) and Mr. Chung Yong Chil (Korea Telecom Trade Union) also joined our AGM. It turned out to be an excellent opportunity for exchange between workers of Korea and Japan.

At the beginning of the AGM, Teito Kiyoshi, the Secretary General of the Zenrokyo [National Trade Union Council] Postal Workers Union talked about the exchange visits by postal workers from New Zealand last April - May. It was very stimulating and encouraging experience for his union.

Lee talked about her own experience in the labor movement and the brief history of her organization (NALMO). She also explained about the current situation of Korean workers and trade unions. KCTU has been fighting against the Neo-liberal economic policies of the government in order to defend the rights of workers. The government of President Kim Dae Jung has been responding to it with harsh repression. Lee introduced the activities of APWSL Korea and made comments on international solidarity work.

Chung briefed us on the history of KTTU and his



Mr. Chung shows a newsletter of KTTU to the Japanese participants

own experience as a leader of the union. He also explained how the process of privatization affected his colleagues. They are still pushing through reductions of the work force. Seo talked about the history of Yong Dong Po UIM and the role it played. He also explained about the active participation of religious leaders and their regional coordination.

After their reports and Q&As, we heard several reports including the following: \* The activities of APWSL Japan for 98/99 \* The experience of NZ/Japan Exchange Program of August 198 - for facilitating discussion on the inormsî for exchange programs \* On the inormsî for exchange programs - a view from Kansai \* Ten Years of APWSL Japan - achievements  
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To Our Brothers and Sisters in the Asia-Pacific Region!

## A Message from the Tokai Region of the APWSL Japan

The Tokai Region of the APWSL Japan Committee sends greetings of solidarity and a report of recent events. The Tokai region, where we live, consists of four prefectures, located along the Pacific coast around the middle of Honshu Island. I live in Aichi Prefecture, which is the commercial and industrial centre of the region. You may get a better idea if I describe it as the home town of Toyota. The car industry is one of the major industries in the Tokai Region, with Suzuki and Yamaha Motors here as well as Toyota. Honda and Mitsubishi Motors have their main factories in the region, too. I worked at Mitsubishi's Okazaki Factory until about two years ago. The Tokai Region is also the centre of the armaments industry, providing a production base for fighters, carriers, helicopters and various missiles for companies such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industry and Kawasaki Heavy Industry.



*Human Chain against the World Expo in Aichi*

### Benefits and Adversities of Major Public Works

At present, Aichi Prefecture has three massive public projects in progress. Firstly, there is the project to build the new Chubu International Airport, which aims to become a hub airport. Compensation to local fishermen for sea reclamation and drilling work to check the ground are under way now. The second project is to build a second motorway to connect Tokyo and Osaka. Roads are being built to link up with this in other places in the Prefecture. The third one is the magnetic levitation linear motor car project.



This is to develop a mag-lev train to be used on the bullet train line, which will cut the travel time from Tokyo to Osaka down to just over one hour. In order to promote these three national projects, Aichi Prefecture invited the World Exposition in 2005. This is to provide the basis for the necessity of a new international airport, a new train line and a new motorway to cater for 25 million tourists from all around the world. These major public works were deemed to be vital in the days of high economic growth in order to build infrastructure to promote economic development as well as to create jobs. However, now we are facing the serious problems derived from major development works, such as air pollution, noise and destruction of the environment, while all the profits go to big businesses, these conventional administrative policies are under strong criticism. I wonder how you see our situation, if you live in the parts of Asia where the economy is still in the process of development.

Voices from Asia to stop

### the militarisation of Japan

Japanese companies from many fields have gone into countries in the Asia-Pacific region, playing a role in the economy of the countries. Probably there is some interest in developments in Japanese politics in your country. Legislation passed the Diet to concretize the new security guidelines, which were agreed between Japan and the US in September. Then, bills which legalized the wartime national flag and national anthem and telephone wiretapping were passed too. Also, it must be noted that a panel to review the constitution was set up in the Diet even though they have no right to submit bills. These developments, along with the tendency to stress the war situation in Korean Peninsula while not settling the question of the war responsibility of the state and compensation, are the first steps for Japan to become a military power, as well as a major economic power, and to open the way to invade Asia again militarily as well as economically. We need voices from Asia at the same time as we put up our fight in Japan.

### Struggle to stop politics moving towards the right

It was the citizens' movement, leftist minority unions, the Japan Communist Party (JCP) and some mini-parties that stood up against this restoration of the pre-war situation. Neither Rengo, the biggest trade union federation centred around big unions which have already been taken into the establishment, nor ex-Japan Socialist Party have any power to stop this swing to the right. In Aichi Prefecture, too, a Peace Action Organising Committee was set up around the citizens' groups to organise rallies, demonstrations, petitions, a telephone/fax campaign to Diet members and a lobby at the Diet. There has been, however, no joint campaign with the JCP.





*Banno addressing the Red and Green May Day*

### Watching Toyota's move

More vigorous local activities This prolonged recession is gradually affecting our living standards, as shown in high unemployment figures and cuts in working conditions. It is also affecting the financial situation of local governments as well as at the national level. We have been organising a campaign against Aichi Expo 2005. The municipal government is putting vast amounts of public money into a 6-month event, with a massive destruction of nature, while the tax-

*(continued from page 1)*

and challenges \* International Solidarity - a perspective from the experience in Kansai [the area including Osaka, Kyoto] (NAW and other NGOs) \* Finances

As main reports were written and distributed beforehand and many points were discussed in each region before the AGM, we could concentrate on some controversial points. The report on NZ/Japan Exchange August 198 concluded, 'The purpose of this summary is ... to work out a better norm for workers' exchange programs'. The view from Kansai emphasized the importance of flexibility in order to respond to increasing needs. There was also a discussion about the reasonableness of proposing for norms to be applied to the whole APWSL. Some members were eager while some members were reluctant.

On the second day of the AGM, we discussed about our plan for 1999/2000. It includes,

- \* promoting workers exchange visits and continuing discussion on the norms of exchange programs
- \* alternative tours An alternative tour to Taiwan is planned for early 2000.
- \* supporting workers' struggles against Japanese companies overseas
- \* studying and discussing social clauses and joining the campaign against child labour
- \* campaign against MAI and WTO
- \* cooperation with other NGOs

Problems of newsletters and improvement of our new internet home page were also discussed.

We then discussed the fourth East Asia Exchange Program. Kitahata and Lee explained about the progress at this moment. We decided to propose the following points to each APWSL national group in the region: 1. to plan the fourth East Asia Exchange Program in Taiwan in 2000. 2. the theme should be discussed by all national groups concerned. At this moment APWSL Japan recommends that we take up one of the following issues: (a) unemployment, flexible la-

payers are suffering from this long recession. Meanwhile, it has come to our attention that the former vice president of Toyota has been selected as the next Head of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Nagoya. The present President of Japan Federation of Employers' Associations is also a former president of Toyota. Toyota is always taking initiatives in promoting all the big public works and in promoting the Expo in Aichi, so much so that people say that the motorway and the airport are being built for Toyota! We think it is unforgivable for businesses to put on the false pretense that they build cars that are kind to the earth and the environment while controlling politics and destroying the environment.

The organisation of the APWSL Japan Committee in the Tokai Region has just started, and it will take a bit more time to take root. Still, in 1992, we sent workers from Toyota to the PP21 International Workers' Forum (Council Meeting of APWSL) in Thailand, then in May last year, we had a visit from Suzuki workers in Thailand. I had the experience of participating in an International Auto Workers Conference in Korea in 1993. I hope that we can organise more exchange and solidarity visits in the future. Yours in solidarity,

Tomoo Banno Coordinating Committee Member,  
APWSL Japan

*This column was translated by Isu Naoko.*



*AGM of APWSL Japan held at Shiomi Church, Tokyo*

bor, casualization, (b) privatization, deregulation, (c) equal opportunity laws, women in workplaces. Lee requested that APWSL Japan should send some materials to explain the reason for the proposal and the request was agreed on. APWSL Japan is willing to cooperate fully with Lee in promoting the discussion and preparation of the program.

Finally, we agreed on the budget for 1999/2000 and elected new executive members.

New executive members are as follows:

Co-representatives Ms. Isu Naoko Mr. Umatani Norichika Mr. Inada Junichi (one vacant - woman)

Co-coordinator Ms. Tohno Haruhi Mr. Watanabe Hiroshi Mr. Kitahata Yoshihide

Yamasaki Seiichi resigned Co-coordinator and will take charge of the Newsletter (English Edition). Kadokawa Toshiko resigned Co-representative. Both Yamasaki and Kadokawa made great contribution for establishing and extending the movement and the organization of APWSL Japan.

*Kitahata Yoshihide, one of the Co-coordinators of APWSL-Japan, works as a translator in Osaka.*

## Report on Negotiations with the Ministry of Labor on Female Worker's Wage Discrimination

# One trial after another against unequal wages, unreliable unions

by Yamane Masako

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, which was approved by the UN general assembly in 1979 (Japan ratified it in 1985), obliges the ratifying countries to observe it and present their reports every four years. The fourth report by the Japanese government did not reflect the real situation. The Working Women's Network (WWN) presented a counter-report to the Ministry of Labor and the Office of the Prime Minister.

Women's wages are half that of men in big Japanese companies even if they do the same jobs as men do. Would you be angry at this fact or just nod saying it happens? Perhaps everyone would be surprised to hear it at first, in thinking about the basic idea of human equality. But, if they know what a company-oriented society is like, they would feel it isn't anything new. The real problem is that many men and women easily accept the fact. Some think there is no choice because men are the sole breadwinners for their families. Some say women are inferior to men. Increasingly, however, women are raising their voices in protest against the situation. Eighteen court cases are pending where women are claiming backpayment of wages in situations of discrimination between women and men. Those women, who are mainly in Kansai area, have got together and established WWN (President, Yasuko Yano, Sumitomo Chemical Co., Ltd.). WWN has made the wage discrimination problem a national and international movement beyond being merely a company problem.

### Discrimination against women and married women

A woman with 22-year career in Sumitomo Metal Industries, Ltd. is paid as little as that of a man with 3-year career in the company after graduating from college. She calls such a salary a "bed-ridden wage" because it is never raised. The manager of the personnel section once said to her, "You're no exception. Every female worker gets a C rating." [Editor's note: C is an ordinary rating]. His words left her speechless. Pressure to retire or harassment against women who are engaged to be married or pregnant are common in Sumitomo Life Insurance Ltd. If a female worker continues to work after her marriage, she is discriminated against in raises and promotion opportunities. Most of the married women have no titles. The promotion rate for single women is 67% while that for married women is 5%. Thus working mothers get double discrimination not only because they are women but also because they are married. Those women are rearing children who will be the main work force in the next generation. Those working mothers should be treated well in view of social contribution they are making. In addition, other kinds of harassment are rampant. Some women were made to do assistant's jobs, or conversely some women experienced too heavy work. A pregnant woman was made to leave her desk at the counter because of her "big ugly belly." Another woman found her desk moved to the window after coming back from child care leave.

Women educated about equality between both sexes cannot keep silence in such a situation.

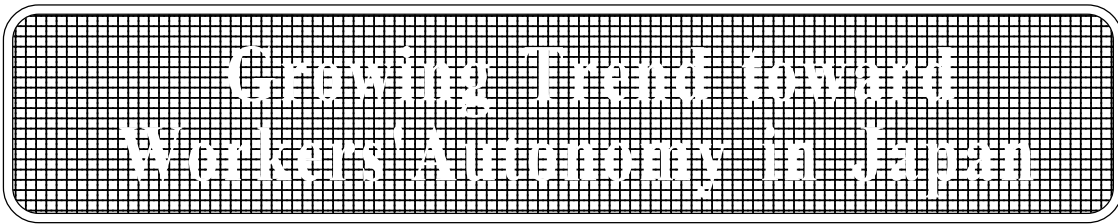
### What's going on in the courts?

At the bottom of this report is a list of 18 pending court cases concerning wage discrimination. Sumitomo Chemical Co., Ltd., Sumitomo Metal Industries, Ltd. and Sumitomo Electric Industries, Ltd. have been sued for the difference from the wages of male workers with the same career and education and compensation. In the discrimination case of married women in Sumitomo Life Insurance, the company was ordered to present its wage records this April. Takasago Construction presented its wage records in April. Shionogi & Co., Ltd., Nomura Securities Co., Ltd., Shokochukin and Sharp Live Electronics will finish trials by this year. Iwatani International Corporation and Shiba Credit Association have been proposed out of court settlements. The pace of trials have been accelerated and judgments will be given one after another from the next year to the year after next. Looking back the judgments that have already been given, the plaintiffs won the case of wage discrimination against temporary workers at Maruko Alarm (an automobile parts manufacturer) in March 1996. The decision at the Nagano District Court called it discrimination beyond the type of employment in question. It was an epoch-making case acknowledging the principle of the same wages for the same work. In the case of the Shiba Credit Association, in which the plaintiffs side won at a district court in November 1996, the plaintiff secured a section manager position. It was the first example in Japan. Both cases have been brought to the Supreme Court and are pending.

### Unreliable Unions

The women in these cases have their doubts about the raison d'être of labor unions. The Japan Federation of Bar Associations recommended that the labor unions of the three Sumitomo family companies disclose their data. The unions are reportedly rejecting it on the grounds of protection of privacy. Because the unions have negotiated with companies based on different career tracks and different wage systems for male and female workers, they might not question the wage system itself. While the unions collect the same dues from female workers as they do from male workers, these organizations put their first priority on the benefits for male members and do not protect rights of female members. It can be said that the unions are sticking to the logic of male society and abusing female workers in collusion with the employers' side. Moreover, keeping female workers' wage lower means that male workers take a bigger share: they exploit female workers. It can be called domination and exploitation or a North-South problem in a company-based society. Of course, problems of this kind extend beyond sex differences. The company society is male-oriented and conservative and Japanese men will not give up their privileges. In the course of time, however, they will be forced to change their attitudes. Our

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by Asai Mayumi

The other day, some young Taiwanese, who are trying to establish a national center of trade unions in their country, visited our office. What they were most interested in was the movement of workers autonomous rebuilding and production in companies in Japan. The rebuilding movement is to reconstruct a business in a factory or shop which is legally occupied by the employees, so that labor credits such as unpaid wages in a bankrupt company can be ensured and the workers themselves can secure their livelihoods and right to work. Self-production and self-operation are other examples of this workers' autonomy movement.

#### *Workers Collectives Organized by the Dismissed Workers' Groups of Kokuro*

In Japan, the former national center, Sohyo, the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan, was forced into disbanding ten years ago. This means that a large opposition group, which had been committed not only to the labor movement but also to the peace issue, disappeared as a result. The firing of 1,047 railway workers in accordance with the division and privatization of the National Railways was a preemptive attack. Kokuro could not afford to support such a large number of people financially, so they cooperated with supporters of Kokuro, the National Railway Workers Union to establish sales channels for their support products. The sacked workers started their own business as systematic self-support, based on an idea of workers' collectives. In some groups, they are working together with local residents now. They run various kinds of businesses, such as the maintenance of buildings; automobile inspections by the users themselves; sales of vegetables and fruits of local specialty; the production of yokan, or bars of sweet jellied beanpaste, sausages or bacons without the use of food additives; the production of woodwork like clocks or beer cups; and the production of soap powder or organic fertilizers from used cooking oil. They faced many difficulties before they could begin selling these products. At the end of 1970s, when Japan still enjoyed consecutive economic growth, there were already many examples of

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mission is not only to put the wage discrimination problem on the agenda but also to take initiative to change the male-dominated society, which the wage problem has ironically taught us about, starting from within our work places. One of the members of the movement says, "One of our roles is to drive a stake into male-oriented society. If the society utilizes female workers' abilities in a real sense, it should be a great benefit for the whole society as well as for companies. With this goal, we are going to eliminate gender biases in the workplace, such as wage discrimination. We believe that our movement leads to a realization of a society where the equal participation of both sexes is secured."



*The main Entrance of Nishida Camera Shop, with a banner of the Rebuilding Committee*

the self-production movement against the shift of the industrial structure and bankruptcies declared in order to suppress unions. Even now, some workers' collectives are succeeding. They produce shoes fitting very well, or make machines for special purposes, using the technology to manufacture Geiger counters and soap made from used cooking oil.

#### *Crisis is Opportunity for trade unions*

I will omit an explanation about the situation in Japan's workplaces as it seems to have already been widely reported. Still, I tell you that corporations will require just-in-time workers more as the competition between them becomes harsher and harsher worldwide. In these circumstances, a new movement has emerged among workers for job creation by themselves so that they can protect their livelihood and rights, rather than merely demand employment as compensation for bankruptcies and job losses. The movement has been in conjunction with movements to build a union of and for the unemployed involving former

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List of Companies in Japan with Wage Discrimination Court Cases 1 Shiba Credit Association 2 Hitachi, Ltd. 3 The Nomura Securities Co., Ltd. 4 Kanematsu Corporation 5 Showa Shell Sekiyu, K.K. 6 Iwatani International Corporation 7 Maruko Alarm 8 Takasago Construction 9 Okaya & CO., LTD. 10 Kyo Gas 11 Sumitomo Metal Industries, Ltd. 12 Sumitomo Chemical Co., Ltd. 13 Sumitomo Electric Industries, Ltd. 14 Sumitomo Life Insurance 15 Shokochukin 16 Shionogi & Co., Ltd. 17 Sharp Live Electronics 18 Shinwa Real Estate

*Yamane Masako is a freelance writer. This article was written for Rodo Joho and translated by Noguchi Junko.*



**NGO Corner**

# the Solidarity Center for Migrants

by Oshita Fusae



*Migrant Workers Labor Day Celebration sponsored by SOL, May 3, 1998.*

SOL was established in 1992 by the Catholic Diocese of Yokohama. One year before its establishment, the Diocese held an International Meeting in Asia for Social Action. The theme of this meeting was 'To seek a Church which lives with Migrant Workers'. Through this meeting, participants became aware the problems of migrant workers, and understood the need for a solidarity movement.

In 1992 they started to make networks for the

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small business owners who were obliged to go bankrupt due to pressure from large companies. Not only do the workers create jobs by themselves but also they stand on the value of ifraternity and cooperation against that of the current trend of competition and elimination. In Japan, a top-down structure still exists in most companies and organizations, and even in the labor movement. Therefore, many union activists now reflect on the mistake of having suppressed the autonomy of rank and file members. The workers' autonomy movement, which has started with bankruptcies, has developed various new methods in its management.

### *The case of the Nishida Camera*

In July 1998, Nishida Camera went bankrupt when Tokyo Sowa Bank refused to lend it money. Tokyo Sowa Bank is the main bank of the camera shop, whose main store is in front of Omiya Station in Saitama Prefecture, about 45 minutes north of Tokyo. Later, it became clear that the bank had been involved in planning this bankruptcy case. The day after a damage suit was filed against the bank, it also went into bankruptcy, in June 1999. Twelve among thirty one union members have been working hard to rebuild the camera shop by themselves. They have operated the shop by using half of the former company building, which they have se-

movement with a Filipina missionary. And at the same time they set up an office at Kashimada church. Now they have three desks: the Philippines desk, the Latin American desk, and the Korean desk. There is also an administrative division. All together, there are five full-time and five part-time staff members, and 30 volunteer counselors, or about ten members for each desk. The desks are run by organizers from each of the three countries. Each desk focuses on different issues. For example, the Philippines desk is coordinating a re-integration plan. This plan is for migrants who are going back to the Philippines. In order for them to develop economic independence, they are saving money and learning new skills. The Philippines desk has also established a labor union of Filipino workers, and they have organized their own theater group. The Latin desk organizers cooperate with Kanagawa City Union to foster solidarity among workers. The Korean desk is run from Kanagawa City Union, where many undocumented workers are organized.

SOL has a project which spans across the three desks. It's the Women's project. The purpose of this project is to organize migrant women into self-help groups. In Japan, so many migrant women are working in the sex industry, so their working conditions are very hard and many have lost their self-esteem. There has also been an increase in international marriages between Japanese men and foreign wives who have experienced working in the sex industry. Many of the couples have problems concerning the relations of husbands and wives. Through the self-help

cured to retain the labor credits by staying 24 hours a day since the bankruptcy. In Japan, the occupation of a workplace to ensure credits is a first-come-first-serve basis. Their main business is developing, printing and enlarging and their skill has been highly appreciated by big film manufacturers. Also, they sell camera equipment, cellular phones, bags, and



*Sausages made and sold by dismissed National Railway Workers.*

ties. Kawanobe Yuji, secretary general of the Rebuilding Committee, emphasizes, 'We would like to rebuild the Nishida Camera as a true business, for our self-rebuilding, we have to be hard workers and to forget about being just employed. Also, we need to thoroughly control various numerical data about the management.'

According to him, the committee members check the financial books every week, and then they are even

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groups, SOL hopes the women regain their dignity and the power to confront their situation.

One of SOL's important campaigns is to get the Japanese Government to ratify and sign the new International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families. The Japanese government is hardly conscious of the human rights of migrant workers. The principle of our immigration system is to control the foreigners. So, through this movement, SOL want to change the Japanese immigration system. Also SOL has friendships with other Asian NGOs. It's very different from other Japanese NGOs who think the migrant issue is just a human rights problem in Japan as a receiving country. They are not concerned in the problems of sending countries.

I interviewed some staff members about the strong points and weak points of SOL for them. A young male staff said the atmosphere is comfortable for him because he has thought deeply about his identity as a Korean born in Japan. He had difficulty not being able to share his thinking with his friends. Since he started to work at SOL, he has felt at home. He enjoys to work with the staff members from other countries. A Filipina staff member said that now, due to the economic situation, human rights violations are more serious. Homeless women are increasing. She wants to work hard to solve their problems, and someday she would like to establish a migrant women's center in Japan. She said she hopes to solve also her own problems through this movement.



A workshop for the women's project of SOL about violence against women, 1 November 1, 1998.

Actually I am a volunteer of SOL, working on the Women's project. I'm proud to be a volunteer, so I'm glad to write this article. If you are interested in SOL's activities, please contact us at the following address.

Solidarity Center for Migrants  
1098 Kashimada Saiwai-ku Kawasaki-shi Japan  
Tel 81-44-549-7678 FAX 81-44-511-9495

*Oshita Fusae has been a member of APWSL Japan for many years.*

### A Farewell from the Outgoing Editor

John McLaughlin

After two years as editor-in-chief of APWSL Japan's English newsletter, I feel both relief and a twinge of regret at not being able to have done more. I initially joined APWSL in 1995 because I was asked to help proofread the articles for the English newsletter. Gradually I got more involved with the group because the members were very friendly, and I enjoyed meeting groups of workers and labor activists from overseas, particularly from Aotearoa/NZ and the USA, where I'm from. For a foreigner, APWSL also offers a good introduction to the Japanese labor movement.

Although I enjoyed the exchange activities, it was with some hesitation that I agreed to become editor of the English newsletter in 1997. After two relatively free years as a full-time graduate student and part-time high school teacher, I then became a full-time college instructor and part-time graduate student and began to feel swamped by my increased teaching load, studies and union activities. The pace of my life, particularly being in Tokyo, continues to accelerate and I'm glad we were able to publish at least 6 issues in the past two years, especially due to all the help I received from Mr. Takahei.

My greatest regret is that I could not do more writing and translating of articles concerning the Japanese labor movement for the newsletter. I hope that when some of my work and study obligations are reduced next spring, I can again write more. In the meantime, I am sure that Mr. Yamasaki will do an excellent job as the new editor. With unique abilities as an experienced Japanese labor activist who is fluent in English, he is also highly aware of the main concerns of grassroots workers movements within Japan as well as the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, he can recruit and cultivate excellent writers and translators in a way I think no one else can.

I hope we will continue to provide interesting and relevant labor-related news to our hundreds of readers within Japan and around the world.

### Message from the New Editor

Yamasaki Seiichi

I have taken over the position of the Editor-in-chief of the English Newsletter from John McLaughlin at the 10th AGM of APWSL Japan held in July. I would like to thank John for his hard work for 2 years to raise the quality of our English Newsletter, APWSL JAPAN. We are grateful for his dedication, especially when we think of the difficulties he must have had as a non-native in Japan and of his multiple tasks he had outside APWSL. John will remain as one of the editing committee members and we still have to count on him for rewriting.

The new editing committee for Volume 10 consists of John, Takahei Masahito, Isu Naoko and me. We will follow the editing policies set out by the former editor. The few changes are:

1. Ms. Isu lives in Osaka, so we expect more contribution from the people in the Kansai area.

2. We have asked Rodo Joho to write an article for every issue. Rodo Joho is the independent labor journal we introduced in APWSL JAPAN No. 31. We hope to widen the topics and perspectives of our newsletter by having their contribution.

3. We welcome responses and contributions from readers outside Japan. We will start from the next issue a corner for responses from abroad. So we hope you send your impression on our articles, any corrections to our article or any message or opinion you want to put on our newsletter.

I believe APWSL JAPAN is one of the few English newsletters available on Japanese labor movement and especially on grass roots international labor solidarity. So I will do my best to maintain this quarterly so that people could use it as a tool to widen and strengthen the ties between workers in Japan and Asian countries.

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more careful about making photocopies or using new ball-point pens. In July 1999, the Nishida Camera Social Trust 21 Action was inaugurated. This is to share the fund among all the members in order to rent the Nishida Camera Building formally for rebuilding the business. The declaration says, "When our process gets on the right track, we shall support our comrades who struggle with their own reconstruction campaigns (by using our profits)". The decline of shopping arcades in front of train stations and the increasing number of bankruptcies due to the opening of large-scale stores in the suburbs are very serious problems for Nishida Camera. These tendencies can be seen all around Japan. The union at Nishida has joined the local stores' union and shop owners have supported Nishida. This was something unimaginable in the past.

## Self-production network has begun to thrive

In addition to the Nishida Camera, such companies as those for the manufacturing and sale of bedding, house renovation, editing and printing, and English conversation schools are going to start networking to create autonomous workers' production units in order to overcome bankruptcies or unemployment. Labor movement in Japan is on the decline as a whole. But still, there has been a sign of change that workers are trying to be independent and self-sufficient through the movements mentioned above, even if such steps are small.

*Asai Mayumi is on the staff of Rodo Joho. This article was translated by Iwakawa Yasuhisa.*

Editor-in-Chief:	Yamasaki Seiichi
Editorial Board:	John McLaughlin Takahei Masahito Isu Naoko
Rewriting:	John McLaughlin
Layout:	Takahei Masahito
Printing:	Nakahara Tsuo

## APWSL-JAPAN

Hoei Bldg. 8F, 3-10 Kanda-Jinbocho, Chiyodaku  
Tokyo, Japan  
PHONE : 81-3-3288-2193 FAX : 81-3-3288-3809

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