

Don't put out the fire of struggle!

Statement on the "Termination of the National Railway Struggle" by the Four Parties and Four Bodies

1 July, 2011

National Railway Motive Power Union of Chiba (Doro-Chiba)

Raise the Banner of Struggle Higher

On June 24, the Plaintiffs Group and the Coordinating Committee of National Railway Struggle declared to "put an end to the struggle".

Nihei, a chair of the Coordinating Committee, made a proposition to the committee meeting held on that day as follows: "I was told from a concerned political party member that JR companies had no concrete plan of employing dismissed national railway workers. I'm not satisfied with this development but there is no more chance of getting employed. My proposition is to put an end to the struggle and break up the Coordinating Committee on June 30".

This proposition provoked anger and protest among the committee members and participants of the meeting: "Negative response of the government and JR companies is no surprise to us. We have anticipated it. The problem is why we haven't organized effective and powerful struggle for the reinstatement of our colleagues in the past year. I'm not at all persuaded. Our struggle should not be ended in this fruitless and miserable way." "I don't accept the joint declaration of seven JR companies that expresses the refusal of employment. I'm opposed to the dissolution of the Coordinating Committee. We must make a strong protest against the policy of JR companies on the employment issue." "There are significant numbers of the dismissed national railway workers who are not satisfied with the proposition of the chair of the Committee."

In spite of these disapproving voices from the

floor, the proposition of "terminating the struggle and breaking up the Coordinating Committee" was approved by the meeting. In fact this policy had already been put into practice and the office of the Coordinating Committee was to be closed.

Even mass media reported: "The national railway struggle for 24 years is going to be finished in an unpleasant way."

Thus "Four Parties and Four Bodies" definitely dropped the demand of employment and let down the banner of struggle.

How they managed to terminate the struggle

The issue of employment (of the dismissed national railway workers) was referred to in the governmental paper on the political settlement last year as follows: "The government makes utmost effort to promote employment by JR companies. It should be taken into consideration, however, that there could be no guarantee as to the concrete numbers of railway workers to be employed because we are not competent to demand employment of JR companies". It was quite evident that the government had no serious intention at all to ensure employment of dismissed workers by JR Companies

"Four Parties and Four Bodies", on the other hand, used to insist that there could be no end to the struggle without solving employment issue and that it would mean a defeat if no job was obtained and workers were left on the street. In reality, however, their actual policy was, contrary to their verbal pledge, to stop acting upon JR companies or on municipal assemblies and to rely upon the political parties

to find solution instead. This policy was acknowledged by the Convention of Kokuro (National Railway Workers Union= NRU). In a word, they decided to take no action of their own to tackle with the employment issue of their fired union members.

In March this year, “Four Parties and Four Bodies” issued a statement: “We suspend our engagement in the employment issue considering the severe situation caused by the Big Earthquake.” Moreover, in May, Hamanaka, general secretary of NRU, openly confessed that he had a perception of severer situation on employment issue after the quake disaster took place. He meant in fact that he abandoned the employment issue.

Meanwhile, on June 13, upon the request of three political parties, namely Democratic Party, Kokumin-Shintoh (New People’s Party) and Social-Democratic Party, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT) made a demand on JR companies about the employment issue. JR companies, however, responded to it on the spot with a flat refusal of employment and issued a joint declaration of the seven JR companies for clarification of the refusal.

MLIT was reported to have expressed dissatisfaction with this response of JR companies. It is evident, however, that the government or the state which is still an exclusive stock holder of JR Hokkaido, Kyushu as well as JR Cargo, had the decisive say in their policy making on employment issue and it could have promoted the solution of the problem. But no action was taken on the part of the government. JR companies well knew that the government had no serious intention of settling the matter of employment.

Facing this development, “Four Parties and Four Bodies” abruptly declared the termination of the struggle without even issuing a protest statement. They explained that there was no chance.

Several members of the Tosodan (Plaintiffs Group) raised their angry voices in their blogs and other ways, but their protests were totally neglected. The struggle was let down.

What the struggle was for

The struggle of 1047 dismissed national railway workers has been a life and death fight for each of the Tosodan, including their families for 24 years. How is it possible to let the struggle come to end in this fruitless and miserable way? What was the struggle for 24 years? Dirty intention of the labor bosses of the NRU headquarters and rotten officials of “Four Parties and Four Bodies” have no right to trample the struggle underfoot or to destroy the pride of the long-year fighters.

From the beginning of the struggle, the NRU executives were not willing to defend and support their union members who had been unjustly dismissed. On the contrary, those workers were for the union bosses “troublesome burdens”. A tragic discrepancy between the officially declared position of labor union and the selfish interest of union bosses had always been a cause of conflicts against the NRU executives who forced a hard life and severe struggle in unfavorable conditions on the dismissed workers. The struggle of the 1047 dismissed national railway workers, however, had never lost its brilliancy and power in spite of the adversity. Consistent and general support had been offered from a large number of sympathizing labor union activists and citizens all over Japan to their struggle.

Setting up of “Four Parties and Four Bodies” in 2006 brought about a new phase to the struggle. The focus of the struggle was shifted from mass protest actions against the government and JR companies to political activities of lobbying, for example, presenting carte blanche to Democratic Party to settle the matter. “An exhaustive reconciliation” with capital was pursued in workplaces. Fewer and fewer unionists and activists maintained their original indignation against the privatization of national railway accompanied by unfair labor practices and an earnest desire for the resurrection of militant labor movement. Instead more and more complaint over the long duration and difficulties of the struggle had spread among them.

As a result the recent declaration to end the

struggle has come to explain the reason of the concession with the following words: “It’s too much for them (i.e. workers of Tosodan) to demand further patience. We need to put an end to the adversity.”

What happened thereafter? A large number of supporters and sympathizers have withdrawn their hands of aid to the life of Tosodan. While the corrupt union bosses are sending letters of thanking to the government and to Rengo (Japanese Trade Union Confederation) for the “settlement of the struggle”, those union activists who insist on continuing the struggle are called “disturbing forces” by the union officials. What an absurd and reversed reality of the labor world!

One year since the “political reconciliation”

Keep your eyes upon the actual development thereafter

In the development thereafter, on April 9 last year, the “political settlement” was reached. It meant in fact an attempt, in the name of “humanitarian solution”, to exempt the government and JNR (Japan National Railway) from their social as well as juridical responsibility for the brutal results of the Privatization of JNR and excuse their unfair labor practices, which brought about massive dismissal of national railway workers and fierce union busting.

One year since that, an important development has taken place, a development that seriously affects the present and future labor movement in Japan, though very few people talk about it.

The instant that the “political settlement” was reached, Kokuro (National Railway Workers Union = NRU) executives swiftly took decisive steps for a fresh shift: the union bosses decided to deprive Tosodan workers of their union membership; it was declared that Kokuro would join Rengo; they proposed to conclude “an exhaustive collective agreement”, which is in fact a workshop rule, with the JR management, professing that Kokuro would make a sincere effort to practice company unionism; Kokuro is going to decide on coming national convention “an amendment of the union rule”, according to which only the

employees of JR companies are admitted to union membership; any and every dismissed worker would be decisively excluded from the union.

What is now developing before our eyes is a horrible conversion and degeneration of Kokuro, which used to play a major and leading role in the post-war Japanese labor movement and therefore became a target of fierce union busting practiced by the Division and Privatization of JNR. It is a direct outcome of the abandoning of the struggle of 1047 dismissed national railway workers.

Only through fighting we can gain a victory

The struggle of 1047 dismissed national railway workers has constituted a powerful counter force to the execution of the neo-liberal policy started by the privatization offensive and a strong bastion for labor counter-offensive. When we closely examine what actually occurred after the Privatization of JNR, we come to realize how humiliating the setback of Japanese labor movement was after that attack and what the real situation of working class is in its aftermath. We become anxious about what the consequence of the end of the 1047 workers’ struggle could be on the labor rights and the future of our labor movement.

In June last year we set up Nation-wide Movement of National Railway Struggle to oppose to JNR privatization and to support the struggle of 1047 workers for reinstatement with a call: “Don’t put out the fire of national railway struggle”. Strong sense of crisis of the present time moved us to this fresh decision. Our call has been successfully answered by a rapid spread of the movement all over Japan, achieved through efforts of the sponsors and supporters. Forty organizations have been already founded in regions and workplaces. A fresh struggle has just begun.

The first objective of our movement is to gain withdrawal of the dismissal of 1047 national railway workers, basing ourselves on the fundamental stand of opposing the Division and Privatization of JNR; the second objective is to build up a class unity of workers across Japan to confront neo-liberal offensive; and the third one is to promote starting of independent

actions and struggles in workplaces even though it may be quite small ones at the beginning; and finally as the fourth, to organize a nation-wide network to support fired workers.

In the past year, Doro-Chiba successfully blocked the overall outsourcing of railway works by waging strikes for five times. Confronting fierce union busting, we have been holding back for ten years the repeated attempts of JR East Chiba Bureau to outsource inspection and repair work as well as yard operations. Our struggle has been strongly promoting organizing of young JR workers to Doro-Chiba.

The root of union's power is in the unity of every workplace. Only through fighting we can gain a victory. Clinging to these principles, we are firmly determined to continue our struggle.

Crisis of labor movement and national railway struggle

The huge Earthquake and subsequent nuclear plant accident have totally changed the situation of class struggle in Japan. High-level radioactive diffusion is threatening the lives of numerous people and several hundred thousand workers have lost their jobs. Under the pretext of the disaster, the government is instructing wage cut of public service workers. Agriculture and fishing industries are suffering catastrophic damages. Moreover, a large-scale tax hike and dismantling of social security system are now being planned.

While angry voices are being heaped up in the whole society and are bursting into demonstrations and protest actions against the government and TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company) in their fight to live, a serious crisis is coming over Japanese labor movement. There are only a few labor unions that raise their voices to cope with the horrible reality caused by the March 11 disaster. In face of demagogic mobilization of national unity in the name of "reconstruction of Japan", class viewpoint and class-based struggle are being abandoned everywhere.

The "political settlement" last year has triggered a fresh attack on workplaces of JRs

with an aim of carrying out a final "show-down of the Division and Privatization of JNR". JR East Company has launched a far-reaching reorganization of the workplace control and labor policy which had been based on the labor-capital collaboration with JR Soren Higashi since the start of JR companies. The road for this fresh policy was paved last year by the "political settlement" on the issue of 1047 workers and by the recent conversion of Kokuro leadership into labor-capital collaborationism.

Railway workers are now being threatened by an over-all outsourcing of railway business which brings about destruction and casualization of jobs, a drastic reshaping of depots and other workplaces with an aim of union busting, anti-labor revision of wage system all in the name of "completion of privatization". Our resolute policy is to confront this all-out capitalist offensive through full mobilization of union members to fight for the withdrawal of the dismissal of 1047 workers and to crush outsourcing as pivotal task. We are making intense efforts to increase the number of union members during these struggles.

Don't put out the fire of national railway struggle!

The time has come. Our consistent struggle and its agenda get general validity and urgency. The fire of national railway struggle should never be extinguished. The most pressing task today is to revive labor movement in the current situation. Our determination to carry out this task against every difficulty is firm and solid.

Don't put out the fire of national railway struggle! Withdraw the unjust dismissal of 1047 national railway workers! Stop outsourcing! Let's create a fresh movement against nuke plants and unemployment, fighting against neo-liberalism and dismissal under the pretext of the disaster!

We call on our friends and colleagues across Japan! We pledge to continue fighting. Please give us support for the nation-wide campaign of national railway struggle and for the struggle of Doro-Chiba.

Let's relieve earthquake victims through people's power!

(1) PayPal Account for Donation:

PayPal Account: bleve21@gmail.com

Account Holder: YAMAMOTO Hiroyuki:

Secretary Treasurer, International Labor Solidarity Committee of Doro-Chiba

(2) Donation through the International Humanities Center (IHC):

Alternatively, donation could be made through the international Humanities Center (IHC) in each following way.

1. Checks can be made out to "People's Earthquake Relief Center / IHC" or "PERC / IHC", and mailed to the Coalition for Alternatives to Militarism in our Schools (CAMS) box: PO Box 3012, South Pasadena, CA 91031.
2. Donations can also be made on line at: <http://ihcenter.org/groups/perc>

(3) Bank Account for Donation:

Some or all of the following data 1 to 9 are required to send a remittance to Japan. And if the purpose of remittance is questioned, please reply that remittance is made for relief to the earthquake in Japan through the National Railway Motive Power Union of Chiba (Doro-Chiba).

1. Bank name: The Chiba Bank, Ltd
2. Bank code# in Japan: 0134
3. Branch name: Chuo Branch
4. Branch code# in Japan: 001
5. Branch address: 2-5-1 Chuo, Chuo-ku, Chiba City, Chiba 260-0013, Japan
6. Type of address: Ordinary deposit
7. Account number: 4177605
Address of Account: 2-8 Kaname-cho, Chuo-ku, Chiba City, Chiba 260-0017, Japan
Phone No. of Account: +81-43-222-7207
8. Account name: Kokutetsu Chiba Doryokusha Rodokumiai
9. SWIFT address: CHBAJPJT 001 4177605
Note: One space is needed between Branch Code# (001) and Account number (4177605).

August 6 — 66th Anniversary of Atomic Bombing — International Rally and Action in Hiroshima Abolish All Nuclear Plants and Nuclear Weapons!

Main Rally: August 6, 12:30PM

Small Arena of the Prefectural Gymnasium

Grand March: 3:00 PM

From the Gymnasium through the downtown to the Peace Memorial Museum

Aug. 5, Conference for Abolition of Nuclear Plants

6:00 PM, Higashi-ku Cultural Center, Hiroshima City

Aug. 6, March against Kan's attendance at the memorial ceremony

7:00 AM, Higashi-Senda Park (near Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital)



<http://cindysheehanssoapbox.blogspot.com/2011/06/send-our-voices-to-world-from-hiroshima.html>

<http://hiroshima100.net/daikoudou>