

# Recent Japanese Labor Movement and Problems of Poverty: Early Signs of Social Movement Unionism

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2009, union density in Japan was 18.5 percent in total, with approximately 16 percent in the private sector. In 1975, union density reached 34.4 percent, and since then this rate has continually decreased. However, in 2009, it drew an increase of 0.4 percent.<sup>(1)</sup> In reality, one of the reasons behind this was that the total number of employees, excluding company executives, decreased from the previous year. However, another reason was that there were efforts being put forth by new labor union beyond the conventional union activities. Since the 1980s, neo-liberal politics have become dominant in Japan, reforming the system of social security and deregulating legislations that protect workers. As neo-liberal reforms expose deep social problems, criticism toward them has grown. One of the sources of this recent criticism against neo-liberalism is the emergence of a new labor movement.

This article explores the context of the revitalization of the recent labor movement, which has focused on organizing the unorganized and collaborating with social movements. Under neo-liberal policies, many workers suffered from declining living standards and worsening working conditions. Existing labor unions, which have organized only regular employees, have failed to carry out the basic function of labor unions to defend workers rights and conditions. Instead, some small but active labor unions have appeared and have carried out the role traditionally performed by unions in dealing with issues regarding working conditions.

The recent argument on social movement unionism discussed in the United States will prove useful for analyzing the revitalization of the Japanese labor movement. Since the 1990s, this argument has focused on the efforts of the labor movement that aim to overcome the restriction of conventional union activities, organize the unorganized, cooperate with social movements, and was “tied to a critique of business unionism.”<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Statistics and Information Department, Minister’s Secretariat, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, “Rodo kumiai kiso chosa kekka no gaikyo,” [Basic survey on labour unions, 2009], December 10, 2009.

(2) Matt Noyes, “Business unionism to sono kiki,” [Business unionism and its discontents], in *Shakai undo unionism* [Social movement unionism], ed. The Center for Transnational Labor Studies (Tokyo: Ryokufu Shuppan, 2005), 183. This English version, which was edited slightly in April 2009, can be accessed on the website, <http://www.re.rollingearth.org/?q=node/148> (accessed July 19, 2010).

Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss pointed out that social movement unions “have focused...on attempting to build unions as organizational vehicles of social solidarity so that workers will have the means for collectively solving the problems they face at work and in society.”<sup>(3)</sup> Akira Suzuki reviewed studies and arguments on social movement unionism in detail, and explained elements of social movement unionism: overcoming the restriction of the existing labor-management relations and redefining the goal of the labor movement, cooperation or coalition between labor and social movement and internal union reform.<sup>(4)</sup>

First, regarding overcoming the traditional framework of existing labor-management relations and redefining the goal of labor movement, it is argued that labor unions should attempt to organize the unorganized and set their goals based on social justice or the concerns of the entire working class. Since World War II, mainstream labor unions in developed countries have represented only the interests of union members, especially economic interests, and have tended to practice business unionism characterized by the “servicing model,” which identifies the role of labor unions as delivering services to union members.<sup>(5)</sup> In contrast, social movement unionism is often characterized as the “organizing model,” which seeks to overcome the framework of business unionism, and aims toward the improvement of working conditions, the standard of wages of the entire working class, and the achievement of fair distribution of wealth. This point is the first element that is transforming the characteristics and the aims of labor unions.

Second, social movement unions seek to cooperate or create an alliance with various social movement groups like environmental groups. Although it has been pointed out that there are different patterns in this cooperation due to differences in their views and goals, almost all arguments of social movement unionism include this element of cooperation or coalition.<sup>(6)</sup> Regarding this relationship, Dan Clawson has emphasized that the labor movement has to strive for fusion with other social movements, not merely operating as a united front. It is also very suggestive that he pointed out the significance of cooperation and concerted activity between both labor and social movements.<sup>(7)</sup>

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(3) Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss, *Hard Work: Remaking the American Labor Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 127.

(4) Akira Suzuki, “Shakai-teki rodo undo toha nani ka” [What is social movement unionism?], *Ohara shakai mondai kenkyujo zasshi* [The Journal of Ohara Institute for Social Research] 562 and 563 (2005), 3. In his article, Suzuki also pointed out the element of the international solidarity of workers, but this article focuses on the development of recent efforts of the labor movement in Japan, and of the cooperation between labor and social movements in Japan. Therefore, the analysis of this article does not include this element.

(5) For detail definitions and arguments of business unionism, see Noyes, “Business Unionism.”

(6) Suzuki, “Shakai-teki rodo undo,” 5-6.

(7) Dan Clawson, *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003), 194-195.

Thirdly, regarding the process of internal union reform, there are viable three opinions. The first insists on reform beginning from the bottom, on the initiative of rank and file union members and union democracy, while the second argues for the importance of the initiative of union leaders educating union members on social agendas. The third, incorporating elements of the first two, acknowledges both the importance of initiative from the bottom and the necessity of the role of union leaders in maintaining union solidarity and a militant attitude. However, all of these arguments recognize that it is essential to mobilize or stimulate participation of rank and file union members, in order to go beyond the framework of the business unionism.

These arguments pointed out new efforts to revitalize the labor movement, but it does not say that U.S. labor movement as a whole changed its characteristics from business unionism to social movement unionism.<sup>(8)</sup> As will be mentioned later, since 1995, with the change of its leadership, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) adopted a new organizing strategy and encouraged unions to invest their resources in organizing campaigns. However, the characteristics of the U.S. labor movement did not change drastically, and there has been a steady decline in union membership. John Sweeney, elected as president of the AFL-CIO in 1995, said that “[a]lthough more unions are investing resources in organizing than ever before, too few are investing at the target level of 30 percent or more of their overall budgets.”<sup>(9)</sup> As Richard Hurd described, “although the pace of decline has slowed a bit for some industry groups..., contraction has accelerated for others,” and “organizing activities has not been sufficient to overcome either the difficult environment for unions in the U.S.”<sup>(10)</sup>

Although it may not be appropriate to apply the framework of social movement unionism not only to the actual transition of the U.S. labor movement, but also to that of the Japanese labor movement, recent efforts to revitalize the labor movement in Japan have had some characteristics in common with social movement unionism. Therefore, the argument of social movement unionism is insightful for the Japanese labor movement, which aims to grapple with affairs both in the workplace and in general society, and play a mediating role between labor movement and social movements.

Hirohiko Takasu has comprehensively explained recent efforts of the Japanese labor movement from the view point of social movement unionism.<sup>(11)</sup> In comparison

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(8) On complicated issues of social movement unionism, see Noyes, “Business Unionism,” 183.

(9) John Sweeney et al., “Winning for Working Families: Recommendations from the Officers of the AFL-CIO for Uniting and Strengthening the Union Movement,” April 2005, recited from Noyes, “Business Unionism,” 175.

(10) Richard Hurd, “The Failure of Organizing, the New Unity Partnership, and the Future of the Labor Movement,” *Working USA* 8 (September 2004), 13.

(11) Hirohiko Takasu, “Rodo kumiai undo no shin tenkai” [New development in the labor movements], *Shakai seisaku* [Social Policy and Labor Studies] 5 (2010): 51-63.

with the emergence of social movement unionism in the United States, Takasu examined the development of the “community unions” and various “grassroots unions,” and the policy change of the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, usually referred to as *Rengo* (hereinafter referred to as JTUC). The community unions that became active in the 1980s have broadened their network on the national level, and have JTUC changed its policy to concentrate their efforts on organizing the unorganized. In the mid 1990s, a new form of grass roots unions emerged, such as the Tokyo Managers’ Union (*Tokyo Kanrishoku Union*) and the Women’s Union Tokyo (*Josei Union Tokyo*), and since 2000 several unions organizing mainly young workers have surfaced. Takasu’s study covered most of the activities of various grassroots unions. Moreover, he assessed the activities of the anti-poverty movements since 2007 and the organizing of a tent city, the Temp Workers Village (*Haken-mura*) for the year-end and New Year holidays from 2008 to 2009, which was combined with the development of the grassroots unions’ network. As described below, labor unions and several NPOs that have addressed problems of poverty came together to deal with difficulties faced by dispatch workers, leading Takasu to argue that the activity at the tent city “could be evaluated as the beginning which has the potential to become social movement unionism.”<sup>(12)</sup>

The objective of this article is to place the recent efforts of labor unions to organize the unorganized and to cooperate with social movements in the context of the transformation of industrial relations, and the growth of the working poor. Considering the development of a new style of union movement in Japan from the point of view of social movement unionism, two different steps of development can be identified since the 2000s.

The first section will introduce the tent city or temp workers village, the symbolic event that took place at the end of the year through the New Year holidays that represented the change of the labor movement. Then, the second section will explain the characteristics of industrial relations and labor unions in postwar Japan. The third section will clarify the changing behavior of Japanese corporations and the destabilization of Japanese society since the mid 1990s. The final section will illustrate the efforts and the activities of new labor movement and the solidarity that has appeared between labor movement and social movements.

## **II. THE “TEMP WORKERS VILLAGE” AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT**

### **A. Serious Blow of Lehman Bankruptcy to Japanese Workers**

After Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy in September 2008, many Japanese corporations started to fire employees on a massive scale. Though the Japanese

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<sup>(12)</sup> Ibid., 58.

economy continued to expand from 2002 through November 2007, which was the longest boom in the postwar period, the Japanese economy went into a severe recession after the Lehman bankruptcy. It is said this upturn in business before the Lehman shock relied heavily on exports to the U.S. market, and companies in the export sector expanded considerably.<sup>(13)</sup> According to statistics on Japan's foreign trade of the Ministry of Finance Japan, in February 2009, exports from Japan fell by a record 49 percent that month compared to the previous year.<sup>(14)</sup> Shipments to the United States fell 58 percent, and Japan's trade surplus was down 91 percent to 82.4 billion yen during the same period.

In the face of this recession, tens of thousands of contingent employees were fired and the number of job offers dramatically decreased. The unemployment rate increased from 3.7 percent in December 2007 to 5.1 percent in December 2009, and the ratio of job offers to job seekers marked 0.46 in December 2009, which was down by half from 1.00 in December 2007. Since November 2008, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has issued monthly press releases on "the current situation of dismissal of contingent workers." According to those press releases, in November 2008 the number of dismissals was speculated to be 30,000, but the number increased sharply to 85,000 in December, and to 158,000 in February 2009. The number increased more than five-fold during these four months.<sup>(15)</sup> The number of employees who were fired from manufacturing jobs was particularly high. In February 2009, 95.5 percent of layoffs of contingent employees were in the manufacturing industry.<sup>(16)</sup>

Under the Worker Dispatching Law that was enacted in 1985, temporary staffing activity was banned from the manufacturing industry in Japan, thus manufacturing companies were not allowed to use temporary workers at their plants.<sup>(17)</sup> However, in

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- (13) "Japan export growth quickens," *International Herald Tribune*, December 21, 2006 <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/21/business/worldbusiness/21iht-yen.3975016.html> (accessed June 24, 2010); Japan Foreign Trade Council, Inc., *Foreign Trade 2009* (Tokyo: Japan Foreign Trade Council, Inc., 2009), 107.
- (14) Bettina Wassener, "Japan's Exports Plunge as Downturn Spreads in Asia," *The New York Times*, February 25, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/26/business/worldbusiness/26yen.html> (accessed June 24, 2010); Takamitsu Sawa, "Going back to Mr. Keynes," *The Japan Times*, May 13, 2009, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/eo20090513ts.html> (accessed June 24, 2010); "Japan's Longest Boom Died in October '07," *The Japan Times*, January 30, 2009, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nb20090130a2.html> (accessed June 24, 2010).
- (15) Toshikoshi Haken-mura Jikkou Inkaei, ed., *Haken-mura: Kuni wo ugokashita muika-kan* [Temp Workers Village: Six days of moving the Government] (Tokyo: Mainichi Newspapers, 2009), 6, 16.
- (16) The Employment Security Bureau, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, "Hiseiki rodosha no yatoi dome tou no jokyo ni tsuite" [Survey of cancellation of employment contract of contingent workers], January 2009, <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2009/02/h0227-5.html> (accessed June 24, 2010).
- (17) The official title of this act is "Act for Securing the Proper Operation of Worker Dispatching Undertakings and Improved Working Conditions for Dispatched Workers." In this article, hereinafter cited as the Worker Dispatching Law.

2003, an amendment to the Worker Dispatching Law authorized the use of temporary workers in manufacturing plants, and many temporary workers were hired. Under the legal framework of temporary staffing, there is “a registration system of temporary workers.”<sup>(18)</sup> This system is that a temporary staff agency pays wages to temporary workers only for the actual days worked, so temporary workers cannot receive their pay while they do not work. Many manufacturing companies have utilized temporary workers as a replaceable resource to adjust to decreasing demand. Since fall 2008, several major manufacturing corporations, such as Toyota, Nissan, Honda, Sony, Toshiba, and Canon laid off thousands of temporary employees before their contract had been expired.

For these temporary workers, dismissal means not only losing their job, but also losing their housing, because these workers dwell in their company’s housing unit. This phenomenon was called “firing the temporary workers” in Japan, and it drew attention as a major social problem. Under this condition, fear of losing their job and their housing started to spread among temporary workers. On December 24th, 2008, lawyers and activists held a 14 hour telephone counseling service, in which they responded to 1,700 cases and received about 20,000 phone calls including those they were not able to answer. Labor activists became deeply concerned about the temporary worker situation at the year-end and New Year holidays, so they decided to establish a shelter for the temporary workers who had lost their job and housing.<sup>(19)</sup> Shuichiro Sekine, the Secretary General of the Temp Workers Union (*Haken Union*), said “What is happening now throughout Japan? If nothing is done, someone will die of starvation and cold during the year-end holidays.”

## **B. “Temp Workers Village” at Hibiya Park, Tokyo**

For the year-end and New Year holidays, from December 31, 2008 to January 5 2009, many people who lost their jobs and housing had nowhere to go since almost all administrative services are unavailable during the holidays. So several labor activists and labor lawyers discussed that they had to establish a “refugee camp” for those individuals to serve meals and provide a place to sleep. They decided to open a tent city, named the “Temp Workers Village” at Hibiya Park, Tokyo, in front of the government authorities in the Kasumigaseki area, in order to demonstrate the dire situation to the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. This “Temp Workers Village” was named after “Hoover Village” in the United States, where lots of unemployed gathered after the Great Depression in 1929.

More people than were expected gathered at the Village. The planning committee anticipated that about one hundred people would gather there, but on the opening

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(18) Until 2003, temporary staffing activity in the manufacturing industry was prohibited.

(19) Toshikoshi Haken-mura, ed., *Haken-mura*, 20.

day, December 31, 139 people had gathered to spend the New Year. The Village lacked the number of tents for sleep, because the “villagers” continued to gather, and on New Year’s Day the number had grown to 240.<sup>(20)</sup> By the closing day, January 5, the village had grown to over 500 people. It is important to mention the number of volunteers and the amount of donations. The number of registered volunteers was 1,692 and the amount of donations toward the village reached 43 million yen. The “Temp Workers Village” at Hibiya Park was covered largely by the media, and gained attention from the public in “firing the temporary workers” as a social problem.

From the point of view of the revitalization of the labor movement, this activity had great significance for three reasons.<sup>(21)</sup> First, this activity moved the government to deal with the problem of mass firings of temporary workers. Establishing a tent city revealed the seriousness of the situation and showed temporary workers who were fired and lost their housing. This made it clear that the government was not able to relieve them with the existing social security system. This activity received much attention from the media and much sympathy from the public, so the government had no other choice but to open up the hall of the Ministry building to homeless people who gathered at this village. The planning committee negotiated with the vice minister of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and several politicians to take in people in the hall, because the number of people exceeded the prediction. On January 2, the committee was able to persuade the government to open the hall of the buildings, and to secure accommodations and improve the consulting system for two weeks after January 5. Several politicians visited the Village and declared their support, and on January 6, both houses of the Diet passed unanimously “a resolution for assuring employment and housing.”

The second point is that solidarity progressed among different national federations of labor. As will be mentioned later, almost all labor activities in Japan had been split along factional lines, and the different factions have had no relations, communications and interactions. However, since the planning committee for this village consisted of different factions of labor unions, labor movement were able to gain experience in working in a coalition for long hours.

Third, the movement created solidarity among labor unions and other organized groups, such as various social movements, NPOs, and lawyers. Village organizers opened a consultation booth as a “one-stop service” where union activists, NPOs’ activists and lawyers were jointly advised by people in the Village. Though labor unions mainly dealt with labor consultation to solve cases such as employment issues or unfair labor practices, and NPOs mainly dealt with troubles regarding life or poverty, in this village they began to consult together as partners not only to solve

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<sup>(20)</sup> Kenji Utsunomiya and Makoto Yuasa, *Haken-mura: Nani ga towarete iru noka* [Temp Workers Village: What is being questioned?], (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009), 35-43.

<sup>(21)</sup> Takasu, “Rodo kumiai undo,” 2010, 57-58.

labor disputes, but also to ensure housing and to apply for public assistance.<sup>(22)</sup> This was a much more effective method of providing support to the temporary workers on the problems they faced.

### III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LABOR UNIONS AND JAPANESE-STYLE MANAGEMENT IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD

#### A. The Distinctive Features of the Postwar Japanese Labor Unions

##### 1. *Workers' and Labor Unions' Sense of Loyalty to the Corporation*

Since World War II, compared to advanced industrialized nations, it has been argued that Japanese workers and labor unions have been characterized as lacking a working-class consciousness. From a political-economical frame of reference, Japanese workers actually belong to the working-class, but they do not identify themselves as working-class people. Japanese workers identified themselves as “employees” belonging to their company. The attitude of Japanese workers, especially regular employees in big businesses, was that the realistic way to improve their “standard of living” was “to receive repeated promotions and salary increases by being loyal to their corporation” instead of negotiation through unions.<sup>(23)</sup> As a survey on workers’ consciousness in the 1960s revealed, in the Tokyo Electric Power Company, the percentage of workers over thirty in 1961 who chose the option to contribute to the increase in productivity for the improvement of life and status was 65.8 percent, and in NKK Corporation, a steel company, the number was 70.5 percent in 1963. In each company, the percentage of workers who chose solidarity with the union was 21.1 and 28.9, respectively.<sup>(24)</sup> In a capitalist economy, companies must survive in the competitive market. Since regular Japanese workers usually believed that competition among companies was also their own competition, most regular employees worked for very long hours, and some of them even worked themselves to death, as can be seen in the term *Karoshi* or ‘death by overwork.’ “According to the ‘Labor Force Survey’ of the Management and Coordination Agency in 1989, the average annual working hours of Japanese male workers was over 2,600 hours.”<sup>(25)</sup>

We can find this sense of loyalty not only among regular employees but also among labor union members. Of course, not all labor unions in Japan have such loyalty, although nearly all labor unions in large private corporations have the mindset of loyalty to the company. For example, the Toyota Motor Workers’ Union

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<sup>(22)</sup> Toshi Koshi Haken-mura, ed., *Haken-mura*, 58.

<sup>(23)</sup> Osamu Watanabe, “The Weakness of the Contemporary Japanese State,” in *The Political Economy of Japanese Society, Volume 1: The State or the Market?* ed. Junji Banno (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), 117.

<sup>(24)</sup> Akihiro Ishikawa, *Shakai hendo to roudosha ishiki* [Social change and the workers’ identity], (Tokyo: Japan Institute of Labour, 1975), 44.

<sup>(25)</sup> Hiroshi Kawahito, *Karoshi shakai to Nihon* [Society of death from overwork in Japan], (Tokyo: Kadensha, 1992), 105.



(*Toyota Jidosha Rodo Kumiai*) wrote in their union's history book that they "hoped for the prosperity of the enterprise, cooperate in raising productivity, and make every effort to survive the competition among firms."<sup>(26)</sup> 'The Steel Industry Contact Conference,' an informal group comprised of leaders of 'the Japanese Federation of Iron and Steel Workers Unions, said in their "declaration of unionism" that the attitude of unionism should be that "the prosperity of enterprises is a necessary step to improve workers' standard of living."<sup>(27)</sup>

For Japanese labor unions in the big businesses, it has been a critical issue for labor unions to improve the company's performance. Historically those Japanese unions had the tendency to refrain from "obstructing the accumulation of capital" and avoid fighting against cases of dismissal of union members.<sup>(28)</sup> As will be mentioned later, they have not organized contingent employees such as part-time workers and dispatch workers.

## 2. *The Characteristics of the Structure of Labor Unions*

Japanese unions are unique not only in their attitudes, but also in their organizational structure. In Japan, the basic unit of union organization is a kind of "company union" organized on a company basis, consisting of only regular employees.<sup>(29)</sup> In the United States, labor unions usually mean industrial unions, or the craft unions, and they are organized beyond the individual corporate framework as one union. Affiliates in each company are the locals of larger industrial unions or craft unions. But in Japan, especially in large private corporations, there is a "one union, one company" structure, and such a union is not a local or an industrial union. We have industrial federations of labor unions, but they are only "federations," not "unions." And they have little or no authority over personnel issues or financial issues of each company unions. Company unions are able to conclude collective agreements without approval by the industrial federation. The point is that industrial federations are not able to keep company unions from heading toward the creation of company-centered unionism.<sup>(30)</sup>

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<sup>(26)</sup> Nijunen-shi Henshu Inkai, ed., *Nijunen no ayumi: 1946-1965* [The history of 20 years: 1946-1965], (Toyota: The Toyota Motor Workers' Union, 1966), 158, recited from Ichiro Saga, "JC: Kigyo-shugi kokueki-shugi no rodo undo," [JC, a labor movement with a company-oriented view and a national interests-first policy] in *Rosen toitsu* [United labor front], ed. Koichi Sato (Tokyo: Satsukisha, 1980), 117.

<sup>(27)</sup> This declaration is recited from Hirokuni Tabata, "Industrial Relations and the Union Movement," in *The Political Economy of Japanese Society, Volume 1*, 96.

<sup>(28)</sup> Watanabe, "The Weakness," 118.

<sup>(29)</sup> Takeo Kinoshita, *Kakusa shakai ni idomu union* [Labor unions tackling the unequal society], (Tokyo: Kadensha, 2007), 117-19.

<sup>(30)</sup> Tabata "Industrial Relations," 253.

### 3. *The Split between National Federations of Labor Unions*

What must be explicated here is that national federations of unions have been divided into three groups according to partisan lines. JTUC is the largest national federation of labor in Japan with about 6.8 million members.<sup>(31)</sup> The second largest national federation is the National Confederation of Trade Unions, usually called *Zenroren* (hereinafter referred to as NCTU), which had 1.2 million members as of July 2009.<sup>(32)</sup> There is also the National Trade Union Council, called *Zenrokyo*, which has 140,000 members.

Both JTUC and NCTU officially declare autonomy from any political parties in their constitutions, but actually they have close relationship with specific parties. JTUC supported the Social Democratic Party of Japan until the split in 1996, and since 1996 has backed the Democratic Party of Japan. On the other hand, NCTU has formed a united front with the Japanese Communist Party. As was mentioned above, until recently these national federations were not able to build a united front beyond their different positions. However through the activity of “Temp Workers Village,” union activists who belong to each national federation took joint action to deal with this common issue.

### **B. The Structure of Corporate Control over Employees**

Why did Japanese workers develop a consciousness of loyalty to the corporation, instead of a class consciousness? In this section, the causes will be explained by reference to the structure of corporate control over employees.

Postwar personnel management in Japan has been described as “Japanese Style Management,” which comprised the “three treasures” of lifetime employment, seniority-based promotion, and “company unions”. Lifetime employment means that Japanese corporations practically secured jobs of permanent employees and refrained from firing permanent employees until their age-limit retirement, which is usually 60 years old. This explanation emphasizes that the lifetime employment and seniority wages system ensured the stability and growth of workers’ income, and this management style treated employees humanely and paternalistically like members of a family. In the postwar era, corporations were usually managed from the long-term point of view, not based on short-term profits.

However, as mentioned earlier, Japanese workers at times have, in extreme cases, worked themselves to death. Workers who have died from overwork worked upwards of 2,900 hours or 3,500 hours in a year.<sup>(33)</sup> We cannot explain this phenomenon only in

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(31) On the number of JTUC, see the website of JTUC, <http://www.jtuc-rengo.org/> (accessed March 16, 2010).

(32) On the number of NTUC, see the website of NTUC, [http://www.zenroren.gr.jp/jp/opinion/2009/opinion091211\\_01.html](http://www.zenroren.gr.jp/jp/opinion/2009/opinion091211_01.html) (accessed March 16, 2010).

(33) Kawahito, *Karoshi shakai*, 38.

terms of loyalty based on paternalistic management. Japanese corporations “established an unusually strong structure of control over workers,” agitating “competition among workers.”<sup>(34)</sup> Seniority-based promotion or seniority wage system does not mean that all employees at the same age received the same amount of pay. In fact, management graded employees by “an extremely detailed performance assessment system.” Under this merit-rating system, managers or bosses assessed subordinates’ promotion according to “not just their ability, but also their tangible and intangible contributions to the corporation.” In addition, after the oil crisis in the 1970s, Japanese companies adopted the “quality control” movement, originally from the United States, which separated employees into small groups and demanded that those groups propose solutions for improving occupational safety and productivity.<sup>(35)</sup> Of course management carried out an assessment of the performance of the QC movement. Through this movement, employees were required to show loyalty to the company and were forced to compete in their contributions among workers. At the same time, companies discriminated explicitly against some workers who assumed critical attitude toward the management, such as leftist activists. In some cases, companies dismissed those employees suddenly and used offensive language or even violence as an example or a warning to all employees.<sup>(36)</sup> Under such a strong control over workers by management, workers and labor unions became increasingly characterized by company-centered attitudes. Nonetheless recently management has begun to dismantle the Japanese-Style management on its own initiative.

#### **IV. RECENT DESTABILIZATION OF JAPANESE SOCIETY AND THE DRASTIC CHANGE OF WORKING ENVIRONMENT**

##### **A. The Attempt to Transform Postwar Industrial Relations**

In 1995, the Japan Federation of Employers’ Associations (*Nikkeiren*, hereinafter referred to as JFEA) published the report “‘The Japanese Style Management’ in a New Age: The direction of challenge and its specific measures.” In this report, JFEA advocated the need to overhaul and transform the existing management style, including lifetime employment, and seniority-based promotion. After this publication, in the latter half of the 1990s, many companies significantly transformed their employment systems and personnel management.

In this report, the JFEA insisted that it was necessary to reform the present state

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<sup>(34)</sup> Watanabe, “The Weakness,” 115, 117.

<sup>(35)</sup> Makoto Kumazawa, “Shokuba shakai no sengo-shi” [A postwar history of the workplace] in *Sengo rodo kumiai undo-shi* [An introduction to historical analysis of the postwar labor movement], ed. Shinzo Shimizu (Tokyo: Nihon Hyoronsha, 1982), 106.

<sup>(36)</sup> Makoto Kumazawa, *Minshu-shugi ha kojo no maede tachi sukumu* [Democracy paralyzed in front of the factory gate], (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1983), 11-14; Makoto Sataka et al., *Kigyo shakai wo kangaeru* [Thinking of company-centered society], (Kyoto: Kamogawa Shuppan, 1996), 45-47.

of personnel management in which corporations held many regular full-time employees regardless of business fluctuations. In order to improve the international competitiveness of Japanese companies, they advocated that human resources management should be more cost-effective. From their point of view, in order to achieve that, patterns of employment should be diversified by replacing regular full-time employees with contingent workers. Their specific suggestion was to create “three employment status” that consisted of one “group of employees with a long-term accumulation of skills,” one “group of employees with highly specialized skills,” and a “group of employees under flexible employment.”<sup>(37)</sup> Employees in the first group are regular full-time employees on the premise of long-term employment, and are expected to move into managerial positions in the future. However, the latter two groups are fixed-term employees. The second group assumes employees who have highly specialized skills, and this report gives the example of a professional baseball players. This group has not been utilized actively by companies yet. For the third group, JFEA assumed that the companies will find it more flexible to hire and fire these employees than in the present situation. Moreover, this report defined this third group as “various workers who can do not only a routine work, but also specialized work.”<sup>(38)</sup> In fact, this report addressed to make the best use of workers under a flexible employment in which management was free to dismiss at their convenience.

## **B. The Destruction of the Japanese Employment System**

The dismantlement of the Japanese-style of management in 1995 led to the development of two phenomena in recent years.

### *1. The Surge of Contingent Workers*

First, since the latter half of the 1990s, as regular full-time workers decreased, contingent workers such as part-time workers and temporary workers have increased. According to “Labour Force Survey” of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the percentage of contingent workers among those employed was 20 percent in 1990, but it increased to 26 percent in 2000 and to 33.7 percent in 2009.<sup>(39)</sup> In 2009, the number of regular workers was about 38 million, and the number of contingent workers was about 17 million. Today, one-in-three workers are contingent workers. From 1997 to 2009, on the one hand contingent workers increased by 5,690,000, while on the other hand, regular workers decreased by

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<sup>(37)</sup> The Japan Federation of Employers’ Associations, *Shin jidai no ‘Nihon-teki keiei’* [‘The Japanese Style Management’ in a new age]. (Tokyo: The Japan Federation of Employers’ Associations, 1995), 32-39.

<sup>(38)</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>(39)</sup> For the percentage of contingent workers from 1990 to 2001, see the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, “The Special Survey of the Labour Force Survey,” and about this percentage since 2002, see the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, “Labour Force Survey (Detailed Tabulation).”

4,320,000. The number of temporary workers rose sharply. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's monthly press releases about temporary staffing services, in the 16 years from 1992 to 2008, the number of dispatch workers increased from 653,598 to 3,989,006, a six-fold increase.<sup>(40)</sup> As “‘The Japanese Style Management’ in a New Age” advocated, the numbers show that regular employees have been replaced by contingent employees.

It is important to notice that an increasing number of contingent workers are breadwinners. Until recently in Japan, contingent workers' contributions to the family income were usually only supplementary, such as students working for an after-school job or housewives having a part-time job. Recently, there are more contingent workers who live off their part-time jobs, especially those who were fired from a regular full-time job. Many of them have two or three part-time jobs, because the wage level of contingent workers is so low that they cannot afford to support a family.<sup>(41)</sup>

## 2. *The Destabilization of Regular Full-Time Workers*

The second point to be made here is that “non-core regular employees” have appeared recently. Those workers sign up with management as regular full-time employees, but they are not provided the security of lifetime employment, so they are easily fired whenever management wants to fire them. In the postwar period, regular full-time employees in large corporations were guaranteed employment until the age-limit retirement, and given the same career track as core employees, though they were faced with a severe competition with their co-workers. Now, the personnel management of companies takes a different stance on issues such as salary and labor conditions, between core workers and non-cores.

Core regular employees work at the head quarters and take on jobs like planning, or research and development, and so on. For them, companies secure long and safe employment. These core regular employees belong to the “group of employees with a long-term accumulation of skills,” in the classification of “‘The Japanese Style Management’ in a New Age.” Using the three categories of work by Robert B. Reich, those employees' jobs can be identified as “Symbolic-analytic services,” which include “all the problem-solving, problem-identifying, and strategic-brokering activities.”<sup>(42)</sup>

On the other hand, treatment of “non-core regular employees” is totally different from that of core regular employees, despite the fact that they are also regular employees. One NPO, which deals with labor consultations and publishes a magazine

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(40) The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, “Monthly Press Release of Temporary Staffing Services,” <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/houdou/index.html> (accessed March 16, 2010).

(41) Kazumichi Goka, “Hataraki-kata to hatarakase-kata kara mita working poor” [The working poor in the perspective of a precarious employment and labor environment], *Shakai seisaku* 4 (2010), 30.

(42) Robert B. Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1991), 177-78.

on problems of labor and poverty, defined core regular employees in their survey in September 2008 as “regular employees with both annual pay raise and annual bonus,” and non-core regular employees as “regular employees without either annual pay rise or annual bonus, or without both.”<sup>(43)</sup> Non-core employees are usually assigned to minor tasks, and continue to receive shabby treatment and are forced to work under unfair labor conditions. Typical jobs of this category are store managers and salesperson of supermarkets, grocery stores, fast-food restaurants, chain pubs, and discount department stores.<sup>(44)</sup> According to this survey, the proportion of core regular employees was 31 percent, non-core regular employees 25 percent, part-time workers 28 percent, and temp and other workers made up 16 percent. As such, at this moment, about 70 percent workers of the total are working under disadvantageous conditions.

### C. The Destabilization of Society and the Emergence of Working Poor

Since 1995, as employment conditions grew worse, the stability of Japanese society has been shaken. This can be illustrated with several statistics, such as an increase in the unemployment rate, a decrease in the average annual income, the growth of the number of households on welfare, and the huge jump in the number of suicides. These four phenomena emerged in the latter half of the 1990s.

#### 1. Four Indications of Destabilization

First is the increased unemployment rate. As table 1 indicates, the unemployment

**Table 1.** Unemployment Rate, 1970–2009

year	%	year	%	year	%	year	%
1970	1.2	1980	2.0	1990	2.1	2000	4.7
1971	1.2	1981	2.2	1991	2.1	2001	5.0
1972	1.4	1982	2.4	1992	2.2	2002	5.4
1973	1.3	1983	2.6	1993	2.5	2003	5.3
1974	1.4	1984	2.7	1994	2.9	2004	4.7
1975	1.9	1985	2.6	1995	3.2	2005	4.4
1976	2.0	1986	2.8	1996	3.4	2006	4.1
1977	2.0	1987	2.8	1997	3.4	2007	3.9
1978	2.2	1988	2.5	1998	4.1	2008	4.0
1979	2.1	1989	2.3	1999	4.7	2009	5.1

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Historical Data of “Labour Force Survey,” <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/roudou/longtime/zuhyou/lt02.xls> (accessed June 24, 2010).

(43) POSSE, “08-nendo POSSE wakamono no ‘shigoto’ anketo chosa no gaiyo” [The questionnaire survey of jobs of young people: 2008], September 7, 2008, <http://www.npoposse.jp/images/08questionnaire> (accessed June 25, 2010).

(44) Takeo Kinoshita, “Working poor no zodai to atarashii union undo” [The growth of the working poor and a new type of union movement], *Shakai seisaku* 4 (2010), 53.

rate continually remained at a low level in the 1970s and 1980s. In the first half of the 1970s, the rate was under 2 percent, and until the mid 1990s it remained under 3 percent. But since the second half of the 1990s, it began to increase and by 1998 it exceeded 4 percent, in 2001 it exceeded 5 percent. Additionally, in the younger generation, from 15 to 24 years old, the unemployment rate rose to around 10 percent.

Second is the decrease in the average annual income. Until the mid 1990s, the average annual income of salary earners who worked for private companies throughout a full year continued to grow, from 4,252,000 yen in 1990 to 4,388,000 yen in 1997. However, after a peak in 1997, it has been on a downward trend, falling to 4,290,000 yen in 2008.<sup>(45)</sup> In addition, during this period, the consumer price index hardly increased. In 2009, the general index of consumer prices was down 1.4 percent from the previous year. This shows that the decrease in average annual income reduces disposable income.<sup>(46)</sup> As the unemployment rate increased and the income of workers fell, the problem of poverty became more serious.

Third, it needs to be pointed out that the number of households who receive Public Assistance has increased. The Public Assistance system is one of the social welfare systems through which the government supplies the cost of living, housing, medical care, and education. After the number of households on welfare marked 586,000 households in 1992/1993 as a lowest point in fifteen years, it has grown steadily until 2008. Since 1951, when the government started to collect data, the number of households receiving Public Assistance rose above one million for the first time in 2005, doubled since 1993. The standard amount of assistance per a year is about 2.2 million yen for a single household, and about 4 million yen for a household of three.<sup>(47)</sup> It is said that the capture ratio, meaning the proportion of households actually receiving Public Assistance in all households under standard of provision, is from 16 to 20 percent.<sup>(48)</sup> Consequently, the number of households that truly need Public Assistance amounts to six times more than the official statistics of 1,149,000 households who are receiving it. In short, there are nearly seven million households that need Public Assistance, but cannot receive it.

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(45) The Planning Division, Commissioner's Secretariat, National Tax Agency, Japan, "Minkan kyuyo jittai tokei chosa" [Statistical survey of actual status for salary in the private sector], <http://www.nta.go.jp/kohyo/tokei/kokuzeicho/jikeiretsu/deta/m03.xls>, and <http://www.nta.go.jp/kohyo/tokei/kokuzeicho/minkan2008/pdf/001.pdf> (accessed June 24, 2010).

(46) On recent consumer price index, see the website of the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/cpi/158c.htm> (accessed June 25, 2010).

(47) Haruo Asai, *Shakai fukushi kiso kozo kaikaku de donaru Nihon no fukushi* [How will the fundamental structural reform of social welfare change Japanese welfare?] (Tokyo: Nihon Hyoronsha, 1999), 116. A brief explanation of Public Assistance is in The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, "Social Security in Japan: 2007," [http://www.ipss.go.jp/site-ad/index\\_english/security-e.html](http://www.ipss.go.jp/site-ad/index_english/security-e.html) (accessed June 25, 2010).

(48) Naoyoshi Karakama, "Chunen iemochi working poor no seikatsu to shakai hosho kaikaku" [Life of middle-aged working poor families and social security reforms], *Politique* 10 (2005), 71.

**Table 2.** The Number of Households on Welfare, 1980–2008

year	number of households	year	number of households	year	number of households
1980	746,997	1990	623,755	2000	751,303
1981	756,726	1991	601,000	2001	805,169
1982	770,388	1992	586,000	2002	870,931
1983	782,265	1993	586,000	2003	941,270
1984	789,602	1994	595,000	2004	998,887
1985	780,507	1995	601,925	2005	1,041,508
1986	746,355	1996	613,000	2006	1,075,820
1987	713,825	1997	631,000	2007	1,105,275
1988	681,018	1998	663,000	2008	1,148,766
1989	654,915	1999	704,055		

Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, “Public Statistics related to Public Assistance,” updated on July 29, 2009, <http://www.ipss.go.jp/s-info/j/seiho/seihoH21b.xls> (accessed June 24, 2010).

Fourth, the increase in the number of suicides is shocking. As table 3 shows, the number of suicides steadily increased during the 1990s, from 21,346 in 1990 to 24,391 in 1997. In the following year, this number jumped up suddenly to 32,863. From 1998 to 2009, for twelve years running, the number of suicides remained over 30,000 people a year. More than 390,000 individuals committed suicide in eleven years. The important point is that among the reasons for suicide, “financial and livelihood problems” and “work-related problems” have increased. The ratio of those two reasons in total increased from about 18 percent in 1995, to 30 percent in 2008.<sup>(49)</sup>

**Table 3.** The Number of Suicide, 1990–2009

year	person	year	person
1990	21,346	2000	31,957
1991	21,084	2001	31,042
1992	22,104	2002	32,143
1993	21,851	2003	34,427
1994	21,679	2004	32,325
1995	22,445	2005	32,552
1996	23,104	2006	32,155
1997	24,391	2007	33,093
1998	32,863	2008	32,249
1999	33,048	2009	32,845

Source: Community Safety Planning Division, Community Safety Bureau, National Police Agency, “Annual Brief Summary Document of Suicide in 2009,” May 2010, 4, [http://www.npa.go.jp/safetylife/seianki/220513\\_H21jisatsunogaiyou.pdf](http://www.npa.go.jp/safetylife/seianki/220513_H21jisatsunogaiyou.pdf) (accessed June 24, 2010).

<sup>(49)</sup> On the suicide rate in Japan, see, World Health Organization, “Suicide rates per 100,000 by country, year and sex (Table), 2009,” [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/suicide\\_rates/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide_rates/en/index.html) (accessed June 25, 2010).



## 2. Increase of the Working Poor

In Japan, the problem of the working poor has recently become a major concern, and has attracted increasing attention, as in the United States. The working poor are workers who have an income that falls below the poverty level. As table 4 illustrates, since the 1990s, the number of salary earners (including regular workers, part-time workers, supervisors and executive officers) working throughout a full year, whose annual income is under 2 million yen, has increased considerably. In 2008, it reached 10,674,609, or 23 percent of all salary earners. An annual income of 2 million yen is too low to support a household of more than three people. Using 3 million yen as a benchmark, the number of full-year salary earners earning less than this amount of income in 2008 was more than 18,195,000, which is 40 percent of the total.

**Table 4.** The Number of Salary Earners Working throughout a Full Year  
(thousand persons: percent)

year	below 20,000 yen of the Total	ratio of salary earners below 20,000 yen	below 30,000 yen of the Total	ratio of salary earners below 30,000 yen	year	below 20,000 yen of the Total	ratio of salary earners below 20,000 yen	below 30,000 yen of the Total	ratio of salary earners below 30,000 yen
1990	7,686	19.6	15,090	38.4	2000	8,247	18.4	15,068	33.5
1991	7,105	17.6	14,220	35.3	2001	8,616	19.1	15,493	34.4
1992	7,126	17.3	14,042	34.0	2002	8,530	19.1	15,592	34.9
1993	7,360	17.2	14,622	34.2	2003	9,020	20.2	16,068	36.0
1994	7,750	17.7	14,795	33.8	2004	9,632	21.6	16,663	37.4
1995	7,933	17.9	14,883	33.5	2005	9,812	21.8	16,916	37.6
1996	8,046	17.9	14,864	33.1	2006	10,228	22.8	17,408	38.8
1997	8,141	18.0	14,573	32.2	2007	10,323	22.7	17,518	38.6
1998	7,933	17.5	14,716	32.4	2008	10,675	23.3	18,195	39.7
1999	8,037	17.9	14,912	33.1					

Source: Calculated by the author using data from the National Tax Agency, "Statistical Survey of Current Status of the Salary in the Private Sector," <http://www.nta.go.jp/kohyo/tokei/kokuzeicho/jikeiretsu/deta/m03.xls> (accessed June 24, 2010).

It is also noteworthy that table 5 shows a growing polarization of income distribution. Calculating the salary level in thirteen categories, there were only four salary categories that increased from 1998 to 2008. They were the three lowest categories of below one million yen, from one million yen to 2 million yen, from 2 million yen to 3 million yen, and the highest category of more than 20 million yen. The number of salary earners in the other nine categories, from 3 million yen to 20 million yen, decreased. Only salary earners in the lower salary categories under 3 million yen, and the highest salary category increased in these eleven years. This is a clear evidence of the phenomenon of the "missing middle" class in Japan.<sup>(50)</sup>

<sup>(50)</sup> Theda Skocpol, *The Missing Middle: Working Families and the Future of American Social Policy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

**Table 5.** Changes in the Number of Salary Earners in 13 Salary Categories, 1998-2008 (person)

category (thousand yen)	the change of number from 1998 to 2008
~1,000	+ 536,842
~2,000	+ 2,204,767
~3,000	+ 736,961
~4,000	- 346,961
~5,000	- 286,952
~6,000	- 449,058
~7,000	- 673,535
~8,000	- 436,810
~9,000	- 299,131
~10,000	- 227,936
~15,000	- 338,984
~20,000	- 39,175
20,000~	+ 46,844

*Source:* Calculated by the author using same data as table 4.

On the one hand, the portion of people in Japanese society who belong to the lower classes has swelled. Conversely, the number of those in the upper class has also increased. Such a disparity of income levels is reminiscent of societies in the 19th century, which had a large stratum of impoverished people and lacked universal social security programs.

## **V. EARLY SIGNS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM IN JAPAN**

Since the 1990s, when the postwar “stable” industrial relations and the structure of corporate control over employees was transformed, Japanese labor unions have faced various problems such as the increase of contingent workers and the worsening labor condition of regular employees. As mentioned above, major labor unions had operated under the mindset of loyalty to the company, and organized only regular employees. In the time of change, it is only natural then that unions faced significant membership losses.

Coming face-to-face with these fundamental problems, some union activists have directed their efforts to changing the existing method to revitalize the labor movement. In this section, efforts to change the current situation of national federations and the appearance of new style of unionism will be introduced, and how the early signs of social movement unionism can be seen in these efforts.

### **A. Attempts of National Federations to Organize the Unorganized**

In this section, efforts of the JTUC and NCTU in particular among the three largest national federations will be surveyed. It was likely at the sixth convention in

1998 that JTUC started to explore methods to organize the unorganized, because they were anxious regarding the decline of union members. At that convention, the JTUC decided to allocate a certain portion of their budget, 334,800,000 yen, to organizing activities and to arrange advisors/organizers to the regional office. At the 7th convention in 2001, they proclaimed that the JTUC had to renew itself, and as the “New JTUC,” they aimed to “represent all kind of workers and launch Social Unionism,” by “working with NPOs and civic organizations, and promoting union movements as social movements.”<sup>(51)</sup> They simultaneously allocated a budget and personnel for organizing. They allocated one billion yen, equal to 20 percent of the total budget of the JTUC, and established a center for organizing the unorganized.<sup>(52)</sup> At the tenth convention in 2007, JTUC founded the “Center for Organizing Contingent Workers.”

It can be said that the NCTU started to organize the unorganized at its nineteenth convention in 2000. They decided to start a fund specifically for organization, which in 2001 amounted to 200 million yen.<sup>(53)</sup> The NCTU established and utilized “Regional Unions in NCTU” as a federation of general unions, which individual workers were able to join. That federation has enlarged since its foundation in 1989 from 1,008 members to 5,965 in 2008, and 10,355 in 2009.<sup>(54)</sup>

## **B. Increasing Interest in the Revitalization of U.S. Labor movement**

In 1995, in the United States, in the first contested election in AFL-CIO history, John Sweeney won the election for the president with a platform titled “A New Voice for American Workers,” that called for policy and organizational changes in the AFL-CIO. Even with the change of the leadership of the AFL-CIO, it is slightly an overstatement that U.S. labor unions eagerly started to organize the unorganized. Nevertheless, since 1995, the AFL-CIO officially began to advocate investing resources in organizing activities, to encourage unions to organize new workers, and to engage in political activity.

Some Japanese labor activists have developed interest in the revitalization of US labor movement, the transformation of the AFL-CIO, the aggressive campaign for organization of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and social

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<sup>(51)</sup> Hirohiko Takasu, “Rodo kumiai undo no shin tenkai” [New development in the labor movement] (Paper presented at the 118th annual meeting for the Society for the Study of Social Policy, Tokyo, Japan, May 23-24, 2009), 16-17.

<sup>(52)</sup> Seiichiro Hayakawa, “Rengo to Zenroren no soshiki kakudai senryaku” [Strategy for organizing the unorganized of JTUC and NTUC], in *Rodo kumiai no soshiki kakudai senryaku* [Labor unions’ strategy for organizing the unorganized], ed. Akira Suzuki and Seiichiro Hayakawa (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobo, 2006), 78.

<sup>(53)</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>(54)</sup> Seiji Terama, “Hiseiki rodosha no soshikika to rodo kumiai kaikaku no hoko” [Organizing contingent workers and the direction of the reform of labor unions], *Rodo horitsu junpo* 1713 (2010), 28-29.

movement unionism. Since the latter half of the 1990s, three books on the revitalization of labor movement and social unionism were published in Japan. *A New Labor Movement for the New Century*, *New Voice for U.S. Labor Movement: Minorities and Women Fired Up*, and *Social Movement Unionism: New Labor Movement in the U.S.*<sup>(55)</sup> These books were translated or written by labor activists and researchers at the Center for Transnational Labor Studies in Japan.<sup>(56)</sup>

There was increased interest in the recent U.S. labor movement in the JTUC. In 1998, Department of Organization translated the book mentioned above, *A New Labor Movement for the New Century*, and circulated it at the convention. Then they sent a research group to the United States to study recent movements of organization, and visited and interviewed several industrial unions, university Labor Centers, and worker centers. Hitoshi Takahashi of the Department of Organizational Affairs in the JTUC, one of members of the research group, said “I understood the difference between Japan and United States through this research, and now believe that cooperation with social movements and NPOs, and labor education is important.”<sup>(57)</sup> Since this research trip, the JTUC has become more concerned with social movement unionism.

## C. The Emergence of New Style Union Movement

### 1. Revitalization of the Labor Movement by Individual Unions

The JTUC and NCTU proclaim that unionism should play a positive role in solving social issues. However, it was several “individual unions,” which became active in the 1990s, that actually achieved solidarity between the labor movement and social movements. Under Japanese labor law, a labor union can be formed if two workers

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<sup>(55)</sup> Gregory Mantsios ed., *A New Labor Movement for the New Century* (New York: Garland 1998); Kent Wong ed., *America rodo undo no new voice* [New voice in the U.S. labor movement] (Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2003); The Center for Transnational Labor Studies ed., *Shakai undo unionism*. The second book edited by Kent Wong consists of interviews translated from the following two books; Ruth Milkman and Kent Wong, *Voices from the Front Lines: Organizing Immigrant Workers in Los Angeles* (Los Angeles, CA: Center for Labor Research and Education, UCLA, 2000) and Kent Wong, *Voices for Justice Asian Pacific American Organizers and the New Labor Movement* (Los Angeles, CA: Center for Labor Research and Education, UCLA, 2001). The third book includes articles written by Robin Alexander, Andy Banks, Jeremy Brecher, Martin Halpern, Nelson Lichtenstein, Stephanie Luce, Matt Noyes, Mike Parker, Kent Wong, and so on.

<sup>(56)</sup> The Center for Transnational Labor Studies (hereinafter referred to as CTLS) was established in 1995 with the purpose of pioneering a new field of “transnational labor studies” across country borders. This center, which consisted of labor activists and scholars, held many seminars on labor issues in United States, Korea, Southeast Asian countries, European countries, and Japan. In 2007, CTLS dissolved, and the Research and Education Center for Fair Labor was established at the Hitotsubashi University which took over some of CTLS’s activities. For further information on the Labor Center of the Hitotsubashi University, see its website, <http://www.fair-labor.soc.hit-u.ac.jp/eng/index.html> (accessed July 26, 2010).

<sup>(57)</sup> Takasu, “Rodo kumiai,” 2009, 16.

get together in a workplace. Even if unions have only two or three members, they are legally entitled to bargain collectively with employers. This is substantially different from the U.S. legal structure regarding the formation of unions, which requires winning an election for representation of all employees in a bargaining unit. In Japan, workers are able to join into outside union as individuals. In this case, the outside union, such as a general union or an industrial union, also has the right to bargain collectively with employers of union members. Therefore, in Japan legal restrictions on formation of labor union and collective bargaining are less severe than the U.S. restrictions. As such, there are no legal restrictions on unions organizing to contingent workers, or contingent workers setting up unions or joining an existing union.

As mentioned earlier, the major labor unions in Japan have traditionally consisted of only regular employees of a company, and industrial organizations have been federations of company-based unions. Therefore, there have been no applicable unions for contingent workers. There have been individual unions organizing contingent workers, such as part-time workers, but these individual unions are intended for individual workers, different from company-based unions. Since the 1980s, these individual unions have engaged in labor consultations and collective bargaining, but the average number of members for these unions was only from a few dozen to a few hundred, and the area of their activities was very limited.<sup>(58)</sup> In the mid-1990s, unions that expanded their area of activities emerged. In 1993, the Tokyo Managers' Union was established, which aimed to organize middle managers who were fired from companies.<sup>(59)</sup> In 1995, the Women's Union Tokyo was founded, which dealt with the various concerns of women in workplaces, such as sexual harassment, coercion to quit jobs on account of marriage or childbirth, and so on.

There are two main reasons why the Women's Union, which particularly focuses on women's issues, was established in Japan. First, Japanese female workers have faced peculiar difficulties compared to male workers, such as lower wages, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and lack of employment protection.<sup>(60)</sup> Secondly, they also faced difficulty solving these issues, because most unions are male-dominated and they hardly take up women's demands as common issues. As such, it was necessary for female workers to establish a union devoted solely to women's issues.<sup>(61)</sup> The distinctive style of the Women's Union Tokyo had a certain influence

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<sup>(58)</sup> Takasu, "Rodo kumiai," 2010, 56.

<sup>(59)</sup> See the English website of the Tokyo Managers' Union, <http://www.mu-tokyo.ne.jp/english.html> (accessed June 25, 2010).

<sup>(60)</sup> Midori Ito, "Interview: Josei union no kako, genzai, mirai" [Interview: The past, the present and the future of the Women's Union], *Rodo horitsu junpo* 1429 (1998), 6; "Josei rodosha no dokuji no kadai wo ninaiuru kumiai wo" [For the establishment of an union to take on the women workers' issues], *Rodo keizai junpo* 1589 (1997), 17.

<sup>(61)</sup> Ito, "Interview," 7-9; "Josei rodosha," 17-18.

on the efforts of new labor movement since the mid 2000s. They have pursued to form not a hierarchical structure, but a flat structure, and tried to induce new union members to engage in writing a notification of joining the Union and a paper demanding collective bargaining by themselves, and encouraging them to take part in other collective bargaining before starting their own. As it will be mentioned later, these efforts to empower union members were adopted by the Metropolitan Youth Union (*Shutoken Seinen Union*).<sup>(62)</sup>

However, it was from 2000 that the revitalization of new labor movement has attracted greater attention, as that was when in the face of the sharp increase of contingent jobs, workers started to join unions and appealed forcefully to the public for support. In 2000, the Metropolitan Youth Union was founded, in 2004 the Union for Part-timer and Foreign Workers (*Frita Zenpan Rodo Kumiai*), and in 2006 the Temp Workers Union was formed.

## 2. Efforts of the Metropolitan Youth Union

This section will focus in particular on the Metropolitan Youth Union, which has noteworthy characteristics in the way of empowerment, organizational structure, and fund-raising.

### *Organization of Contingent and Non-Core Regular Workers*

Recently contingent workers and non-core regular workers have been working under poor working conditions. Although it is illegal, employers continue to practice acts such as not paying workers for worked overtime, limiting paid leaves, and not providing workers benefits like pensions and health care insurance. The Youth Union organizes those workers and attempts to improve such severe working conditions.

In July 2006, the largest beef bowl chain restaurant, “Suki-ya” dismissed part-time workers for the purpose of renovation of the restaurant. The restaurants resumed business after one week of renovation without rehiring the dismissed workers. Six part-time workers joined the Youth Union and bargained with the management on this issue. At the collective bargaining, management justified the dismissals on the grounds that they needed to “renew employees who have been working many years.” The workers were upset that management treated them like unclean equipment, not human beings, even though they had worked for three to five years as part-time employees. In September 2006, after persistent bargaining they achieved the withdrawal of their dismissals and obtained two years’ back overtime pay. Since December 2006, the company started to pay overtime to all ten thousand part-time workers.

In another case, the major beauty salon chain, “Ash” had hairdressers working

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<sup>(62)</sup> Midori Ito, “Watashi ha naze jousei union no kessei wo sentaku shitanoka” [Why have I establish the Women’s Union?], *Rodo horitsu junpo* 1576 (2004), 48, 50; “Interview,” 13.

long hours, from 8:00 a.m. to midnight, without paying for the overtime. The Union bargained, and in January 2008 won overtime pay for 338 employees, a total of 48 million yen.<sup>(63)</sup>

### *The Empowerment of Workers*

Makoto Kawazoe, Secretary General of the Youth Union, said the Union made sure to make members themselves “write a notification of joining the Union and a paper demanding collective bargaining, and calculate back overtime pay, and submit it to their companies.” It became a sort of a ceremony to make workers push the button of the fax machine, when they sent those documents to the management of their companies. This was a way to make it clear that “the person who is fighting in the case is him/herself,” and the Union will support that person.<sup>(64)</sup> This activity, adopted from the attempts of the Women’s Union Tokyo, is not a high standard of empowerment, but is significant because these efforts to empower rank and file union members are still uncommon.

### *Pursuing the Industry-Wide Activities*

The Youth Union pursues an industry-wide solution, not just the problem of the person who consults them. As in the above-mentioned cases, the Union seeks to obtain back overtime pay not just for union members, but for all workers in the industry. The Union does not dare to establish any company affiliates as one unit, even if there are a number of members from one company. They establish only regional affiliates. They fear that if they established company affiliates, those affiliates would tend to lose interest in social issues outside the company.<sup>(65)</sup> From this position, it is clear that the Union intends to maintain the connection with social issues.

Instead of establishing company affiliates, the Union appreciates the significance of forming industry-wide groups. In October 2007, they founded “the Tokyo Metropolitan Hairdressers Union” as a local of the Youth Union. Hairdressers are regular full-time workers, but their wage level is very low making them members of the working poor. The Union said “many young hairdressers have their dreams shattered, because of the long work hours and illegal practices widespread in the beauty business.” Of course the Youth Union does not have the power to negotiate against the industry, *per se*, to regulate the wage level and working conditions, but it is clear that this Union aims to improve labor conditions at the industrial level beyond the activities of company-based unions.<sup>(66)</sup>

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<sup>(63)</sup> “Tokyo Metropolitan Hairdressers Union Makes Great Success,” January 17, 2008, <http://www.seinen-u.org/biyousi-union.html> (accessed June 25, 2010).

<sup>(64)</sup> Makoto Kawazoe et al., “Ima naze ‘wakamono rodo undo’ nanoka” [Why is the young labor movement developing now?], *Sekai* 765 (2007), 110–11.

<sup>(65)</sup> Kinoshita, *Kakusa shakai*, 167.

### *New Way to Fund-Raising*

It is common knowledge that unions secure their finances by collecting union dues from members. However, 70 percent of the Youth Union members are contingent workers, and the Union is not able to collect high union dues from them. So in 2004, they founded “the Supporters Group of the Youth Union,” which consists of university professors, high school teachers, lawyers, and union activists. This group, which had 558 members in 2007, collected about 10 million yen, by which the Union was able to cover the payment of two full-time organizers.<sup>(67)</sup> This method was an unusual, but significant tactic for unions trying to organize contingent workers.

The new style of individual unionism has aggressively organized the unorganized contingent workers, engaged in labor consultation, and pursued an industry-wide movement. It can be seen as a first step in the development of a new social movement unionism.

## **D. The Solidarity between Labor Movement and Social Movements**

### *1. Deepening Problems of Poverty in Japan*

Since the latter half of the 2000s, problems of poverty increasingly attracted public attention, especially deaths from starvation, a situation hard to imagine in a prosperous society. A case that had an impact on the public occurred in May 2006, where a man died from starvation in a city in western Japan, and was found in his house after four months after his death. He had gone to the local government office (ward office) and asked for Public Assistance twice, because he had lost his job and was deprived of any earning opportunity. But at both times, the official in charge of welfare refused to give him the necessary application form. His power supply, gas supply, and water supply were cut off and he eventually died. The local government was denounced for the failure to help this man, some saying that “it is the same as being killed by the government.” This case showed the public that in Japan some people were not able to receive Public Assistance, or even apply for it, even though they were jobless, had no income, and were not able to rely on their relatives.

A year later in July 2007, in the same city, there was another case of a man dying from starvation. This time the body was found one month after his death. He had received Public Assistance from the end of 2006, but in April 2007 “excused himself” from receiving the Assistance. The impact of this case was magnified by what was written in his diary. The officials explained that the man said he would work, and excused himself from Public Assistance, but he wrote on April 10 that he had been forced to find a job, though actually he could not, and was forced to excuse himself from the Assistance. Shortly before his death he wrote “I want to eat a rice ball.”

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<sup>(66)</sup> Kinoshita, “Working poor,” 58.

<sup>(67)</sup> The number of members in this Supporters Group is over one thousand. *Ibid.*, 57.



According to the press release, he ate wild grass to stave off hunger.<sup>(68)</sup>

In these cases, it became apparent that the local government not only refused to take the application form, but also they often cut off Public Assistance. By law, everyone is entitled to apply for Public Assistance, and the government must accept the application form. It is against the Public Assistance Act for the local government to reject an application form at the window. Several NPOs and lawyers intensified their activities to stop such treatment by the government, and to give support to the applicants of Public Assistance.

## 2. *Toward Solidarity between Labor Movement and Social Movements*

The context in which labor consultation takes place is becoming worse. The wage level of contingent workers and non-core regular employees is very low. If they lose their job, what will happen to them? They will run out of their savings almost instantly. Nowadays it is difficult to find a new job. So they will likely fail to pay their rent and may lose their housing.

In this situation, labor consultation must go beyond just consulting on narrowly defined labor issues. In practice, individual unions consult people who were fired and kicked out their houses. It is not helpful for these people if unions advise them to join the union and bargain with management. Although unions need to assist them to apply for some sort of welfare, union staff often do not know the correct procedure. Unions have assumed that it is their role to give support to the people who come to consult, so that they can make their own move. Therefore, unions usually have not undertaken those procedures needed for supporting the welfare of the consultants.

In this context, Makoto Kawazoe of the Youth Union met with Makoto Yuasa, the director general of an NPO called “Moyai.”<sup>(69)</sup> Moyai, one of the NPOs that deal with poverty and related problems, provides consultations to suffering people, helps homeless people rent a room, and helps people apply for Public Assistance. Yuasa has been one of the key players in the new anti-poverty movement. In January 2007, the two *Makotos* met for the first time for a discussion in a magazine. It was a chance meeting, but they were meant to run into each other since the sphere of the labor movement and that of the anti-poverty movement are now overlapping. After their meeting, the labor movement and social movements started to cooperate on anti-poverty movement. This meeting of labor and social movements and developing solidarity was able to be seen as a second step in the development of social movement unionism.

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<sup>(68)</sup> “Seikatsu hogo jitai, kodoku-shi” [Refusal of Public Assistance, dying alone], *Yomiuri Shinbun*, July 12, 2007; Norimitsu Onishi, “In Death Diary, Japan Welfare Is Cast as Killer,” *New York Times*, October 12, 2007.

<sup>(69)</sup> Moyai means “sharing something with another.” On a brief explanation of Moyai, see the website of Moyai, <http://www.moyai.net/modules/m1/index.php?id=14&tmid=21> (accessed June 25, 2010).

In October 2007, the Metropolitan Youth Union and Moyai established the “Anti-Poverty Network, Japan” in conjunction with other different civil groups and lawyers dealing with poverty issues.<sup>(70)</sup> This network became the space where the labor movement and social movements were able to unite their efforts in order to solve various poverty issues. Their goal was to solve problems of poverty by fighting against the policies that shrink the social security system, to expose the reality of poverty to the public, and to search for social and political solutions. Yuasa assumed the position of director general and Kawazoe took part in its organizing committee. After the founding of this Network, the labor movement and social movements combined their efforts to tackle poverty issues. The Anti-Poverty Network mobilized different activists and movements for rallies, symposia, and festivals. From the labor movement, not only activists from the new individual labor unions, but also activists from the national federations such as JTUC, NCTU, and the National Trade Union Council became involved.

As mentioned above, since 2006 poverty issues have become a major social concern in Japan. The collaboration between the Youth Union and Moyai, and more broadly, between the labor and social movements, became the turning point that dramatically intensified the interest of the public. Kawazoe and Yuasa were covered in the mass media as symbols of the anti-poverty movement, and several documentary programs were aired covering the activities of the Youth Union and Moyai.<sup>(71)</sup> This trend in the mass media was influential and spread quickly throughout the public. These recent movements seem to confirm an observation made by Dan Clawson: “social movements mushroom when they break out of their past confines and tap into new constituencies and networks.”<sup>(72)</sup>

It was this new solidarity between the labor and social movements that made possible the “Temp Workers Village,” mentioned at the beginning of this article. As Yuasa observed at the symposium on June 28, 2009, “[t]he Tent City movement was novel in the sense that it linked groups consulting on troubles about life and groups connected with labor.”<sup>(73)</sup>

## VI. CONCLUSION

Since World War II, most Japanese labor unions in large private corporations had only the organizational characteristics of the “company union” organized on a company

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<sup>(70)</sup> Makoto Yuasa, “Japan’s Anti-Poverty Policies in Need of Change After 50 Years of Stagnation,” September 04, 2009, <http://www.k5.dion.ne.jp/~hinky/090904article.yuasa.html> (accessed June 25, 2010).

<sup>(71)</sup> Labor Net Japan, “Press Conference at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan on the Issue of Poverty and Employment,” March 1, 2009, <http://labornetjp.blogspot.com/2009/03/press-conference-at-foreign.html> (accessed June 25, 2010).

<sup>(72)</sup> Clawson, *The Next Upsurge*, 195.

<sup>(73)</sup> Labor Net Japan, “Common Place for both of Life and Labor Movements Now?” July 15, 2009, <http://labornetjp.blogspot.com/2009/07/common-place-for-both-of-life-and-labor.html> (accessed June 25, 2010).

basis, and a sense of loyalty to their own corporation. Japanese workers were characterized by their company-centered attitudes, which were created under the management's strong control over the workers, such as an extremely detailed performance assessment system, competition among workers and discrimination against those workers who acted against the management. This indicates that the union's conventional mindset was a reflection of employees' sense of loyalty to the corporation, and that labor unions have failed to combat the strong control over workers by the management.

In 1995, the JFEA insisted on the reform of "Japanese Style Management" in order to restore the international competitiveness of Japanese companies, which led to significant changes in employment circumstances, including the weakening of lifetime employment and the seniority wage system. The number of regular full-time employees has diminished and the number of contingent workers has surged. Furthermore, "non-core regular employees," who are not afforded the job security and wage increases like traditional regular full-time employees have appeared and increased recently.

The policy changes made by the JTUC and NCTU, which allocated more of their budgets to organizing activities, and the efforts of several new individual grassroots unions emerging since the mid 1990s, represented the labor unions' attempts to address the need for transformation of traditional employment circumstances in order to prevent a decrease in union membership. As mentioned above, the movement of the Metropolitan Youth Union, such as industry-wide activities, the empowerment of rank and file union members, and new ways to raise funds, attracted attention as attempts to overcome the conventional framework of traditional labor unions.

Since the mid 2000s, the labor movement as well as several other groups that have dealt with poverty issues started to cooperate in the anti-poverty movements, due to the fact that the impoverishment of workers erased the boundary between labor issues and poverty issues. Thereupon, the coalition between labor and social movements became noticeable to the Japanese labor movement. The appearance of individual grassroots union movements and the coalition between labor and social movements made possible the activity of the tent city, "Temp Workers Village" for the year-end and New Year holidays from 2008 to 2009.

Then, in the 2009 general election, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lost after 50 years of nearly uninterrupted rule and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won the majority. One of the reasons for the DPJ's victory in this election was the increased opposition to the neo-liberal policy and the structural reform that the recent LDP government had implemented in the past several years. Originally, the DPJ competed against the LDP, promoting its own set of neo-liberal policies. During the Junichiro Koizumi cabinet, from 2001 to 2006, the DPJ criticized his cabinet and

the LDP for their inability to carry out structural reforms. However, in 2006, prior to the Upper House election of 2007, the DPJ began to change their position on the neo-liberal policy. They began to criticize Koizumi's structural reform program and proclaimed that "People's Lives are above anything else," which became the party's campaign slogan. The DPJ was able to garner the votes of those against the LDP's structural reform.<sup>(74)</sup>

As described below, the Yukio Hatoyama cabinet has made several new attempts that had not been implemented by LDP governments. In the aftermath of the DPJ's victory, on October 20, the Hatoyama cabinet officially announced the relative poverty rate, something that had not been done by LDP governments since 1966. Makoto Yuasa assumed the position of advisor to the Cabinet Office, and the government established a "one-stop service" at the unemployment office in order to counsel workers on matters of both working conditions and life. For the year-end and New Year holidays from 2009 to 2010, an official shelter was established to accommodate temporary workers who had lost their jobs and housing in Tokyo.<sup>(75)</sup>

Although the impact that the labor and anti-poverty movements have on the DPJ or the Hatoyama government is weak, there has been some progress since the DPJ came to power. In December 2009, the DPJ government restored the supplement for single-parent households who receive public assistance, which had been gradually weakened since 2005 and abolished outright in April 2009. Restoring the supplement for single-parent households was crucial for groups fighting to improve the system and the operation of Public Assistance, but Akira Nagatsuma, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, who took an active role in restoring this supplement, faced strong opposition in the Hatoyama Cabinet.<sup>(76)</sup> Furthermore, the fundamental revision of the Worker Dispatching Law has not passed as of April 2010, though this was one of the highest-priority issues for the labor movement. It forcefully demanded the reinstatement of banning the use of temporary workers in the manufacturing industry and restrictions of "registration system of temporary workers." The bill was submitted to the Diet by the government, but many labor groups argued strongly that the bill would not be a solution to the problems facing temporary workers. Although this bill bans the use of temporary workers in manufacturing and the registration system of temporary workers as a general rule, it allows temporary work agencies to use temporary workers who are expected to be hired for more

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(74) Osamu Watanabe, "Seiken kotai to minshu-to seiken no yukue," [The change of the government and the future of the DPJ government] in *Shin jiyu shugi ka shin fukushi kokka ka* [The Neo-Liberalism or the New Welfare State?], Osamu Watanabe et al. (Tokyo: Junposha, 2009).

(75) Yusuke Murata, "Minshu-to seiken-ka no hinkon taisaku no tenbo to han-hinkon undo no kadai" [The prospect of poverty programs under the DPJ Government and the issues confronting the anti-poverty movement], *People's Plan* 49 (2010), 53-54.

(76) For further information on the process of this subject, see *Ibid.*

than one year in the manufacturing industry, and allows for a “registration system” in twenty-six job categories that require specialized skills, as exceptions.<sup>(77)</sup>

These developments do not necessarily mean that the labor movement has shifted to social movement unionism as a whole, or that the labor movement has established its influence on the policy making in the DPJ cabinet. However, activities akin to the tent city and the anti-poverty movement have attracted public interest. They had the impact of influencing the government, and led to cooperation amongst different factions of the labor movement and the forming of coalitions between the labor and social movements. Faced with worsening working conditions and an increase in the working poor, elements of the labor movement have tried to overcome the conventional framework of traditional labor unions, organizing the unorganized and cooperating with social movements. From the viewpoint of social movement unionism, it is significant that the labor movement achieved specific goals, and garnered social influence even if it did not last so long. While these efforts have not been in the mainstream labor movement, they are worthy of attention for the influence on the future direction of the Japanese labor movement, and they indicate early signs of social movement unionism at the grass roots level.

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(77) In the 2008 fiscal year, 353,656 temporary workers were “employed regularly by temporary work agencies” in the manufacturing industry. This was 63.3 percent of the total of 558,089 temporary workers in the manufacturing industry. Many workers fired from manufacturing jobs were temporary workers who were employed regularly, so it has been pointed out that this bill will have no effect to ban the temporary staffing activity in the manufacturing industry. As for the exception of the registration system, as of June 1, 2008 there were 998,569 temporary workers who work in twenty-six job categories. In 2008, there were about one million temporary workers in total, which means that quarter of all temporary workers are not covered by the bill’s restriction. The Demand and Supply Adjustment Division, Employment Security Bureau, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, “Rodosha haken jigyo no heisei 20 nendo jigyo hokoku no shukei kekka nitsuite” [A brief explanation of annual report of temporary staffing services for 2008], December 11, 2009, <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/houdou/2r98520000032dh.html> (accessed July 25, 2010); “EDITORIAL: Dispatched Workers,” *The Asahi Shinbun*, May 5, 2010, <http://www.asahi.com/english/TKY201005040224.html> (accessed July 26, 2010); Heidi Gottfried, “Pathways to Economic Security: Gender and Nonstandard Employment in Contemporary Japan,” *Social Indicators Research* 88 (2008), 186, 189.

— Abstract —

This article addresses the recent efforts of Japanese labor unions to organize the unorganized and to cooperate with social movements. The activities of the tent city for temporary workers for the year-end and New Year holidays from 2008 to 2009, represented change in the labor movement, such as cooperation among activists belonging to different national federations of labor, and solidarity among labor unions and other organized groups, NPOs, and lawyers. A new style of union movement has emerged in the past two decades in the form of individual grassroots union movements, due to significant changes in the employment system, the destabilization of Japanese society, and the increase in the working poor. Social movement unionism approach is used in this article to draw analogies between Japan and U.S. labor movements. This analysis of new union movement highlights the attempts to organize contingent and non-core regular workers, pursue industry-wide activities, empower rank and file union members, search for new ways to raise funds, and unite labor and social movements against poverty. This movement suggests a possible future direction of the Japanese labor movement.