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Japanese Communist Party

Seminar on Issues Facing Workplaces

April 22-23, 2006
JCP Head Office, Tokyo

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by SHII Kazuo
JCP Executive Committee Chair

The Japanese Communist Party on April 22 and 23, 2006 held a seminar at its head office to analyze situations in workplaces and share experiences of JCP branches in the struggle against corporate attacks on workers. About 400 JCP activists in various workplaces and prefectural and district committee members attended.

Report
by SHII Kazuo
Japanese Communist Party Executive Committee Chair

I

A Nationwide Survey Conducted in Preparation for the Seminar

The Japanese Communist Party 24th Congress confirmed the need for an extra effort to drastically increase JCP activities at its workplace branches and to hold meetings regularly to share party experiences at JCP workplace branches. The present meeting is the first.

In preparing for this meeting, the JCP maintained the policy of learning about the realities of JCP workplace branches in order to seek ways solve problems by using the experience of workers. As part of this effort, the JCP Central Committee, with help from prefectural committees, visited more than 270 JCP workplace branches throughout Japan for interviews with JCP branch members. We read and studied all the reports concerning these interviews.

These interviews have helped us realize several important things.

First, adversely affected by large corporations' harsh control of workplaces as well as Liberal Democratic Party government policies, the job market and working conditions are worsening rapidly for all workers, fulltime and contingent, at large corporations as well as in the public sector. This is harming workers emotionally as well as physically, damaging family life, and depriving them of hope for the future. If nothing is done to improve this situation, the future of workers will be in grave peril. At no times since the end of World War II in Japan, have working conditions deteriorated so much as today. I could not but feel indignant at the serious situation described in detail in the reports.

Second, despite all these difficult conditions, JCP workplace branches and their members are showing unyielding devotion. I really felt that they are proving their worth by inspiring Japanese workers and the general public to continue to struggle.

A member from a JCP workplace branch at a large corporation in Saitama Prefecture reported that they made efforts to increase their contacts with co-workers to change the situation in which JCP members were severely discriminated against and deliberately ignored by other workers. They began by saying "Good morning" to other workers in the workplace. This is one example of how the JCP is working hard to defend its positions.

There was a report about a teacher in Chiba Prefecture, who said that in trying to solve problems he uses the right hand to rescue a drowning student while extending the left hand to another student and his shoulders to still another student who is on his back while he himself is almost drowning. The report also related how the group cooperated with parents and residents to stop the plan to close the high school.

I am very impressed by those struggles in which JCP members showed perseverance and devotion.

Thirdly, the "baby-boom generation" is retiring from many places of work, and this includes many JCP members. Clearly, the urgent task is for us to set to work to make progress in party building efforts, including bringing up successors. JCP members around the country share the desire to pass on to the next generation of members the JCP positions that they have defended in defiance of many difficulties.

In this Seminar, as part of the effort to make progress in JCP workplace branch activities, we would like to share our experiences, take a hard look at the realities facing workers, and explore ways to solve problems facing workplaces today.

II

Viewing the Situation with Confidence Armed with the Strength of JCP Congress Resolutions

Let me begin by reporting on how we should view the present situation.

JCP workplace branches that have discussed and studied the JCP 24th Congress decisions as well as the JCP Program have confidence in the way these party documents articulate the present domestic and international situations as well as in the JCP role, and are thus obtaining new energy and perspectives.

Workers' concerns are not limited to issues about their workplaces. They are concerned with domestic and world affairs as well. They express anger and discontent about distorted politics. In discussing the JCP in response to workers' sentiments, we need to grasp the international situation as well as the domestic situation and the role of the JCP.

Three months have passed since the JCP 24th Congress. Its decisions have been vindicated in the course of the development of the situation during this short period of time. I just want to mention three points in this regard.

(1) Evils of capitalism without rules and neo-liberalism exposed

First, I want to point out that the evils of capitalism without rules, and in particular the economic policy of neo-liberalism, which the JCP Congress exposed, are present everywhere.

The widening social gap and the increasing poverty rate are a major social issue. Media have begun to report on these issues. The ruling parties as well as the opposition parties are now obliged to talk about the issue of the increasing social gaps. Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro initially understated this issue, saying, "The social gap is not widening as rapidly as it is rumored." When his arrogance came under fire, he began to say, "If the nation's economy improves, we can solve the problem."

The social gap began to widen and the poverty rate increased rapidly in the late 1990s. This is not a natural phenomenon. The problem will not disappear even if the economy improves as expected by the prime minister. The government says that "the economy is on a recovery track," but it is limited to a tiny number of prospering large corporations and a handful of wealthy people. They are prospering through depriving a vast majority of people. This is how the huge group of low-income earners has emerged.

Government statistics show that two income groups have grown rapidly during the last 10 years. The number of people with an annual income of less than 2 million yen (approx. 17,000 US dollars) has increased by 24 percent to reach 10 million. The number of wealthy people with an annual income of more than 20 million yen (approx. 170,000 US dollars) has increased by 30 percent, to about 200,000. The fact of the matter is, while the tiny number of large corporations and wealthy people are getting even richer, the poverty rate is becoming higher.

The government's "structural reform" policy that favors large corporations is largely to blame for the widening social gap. In other words, there are three political evils associated with this policy. (1) It has destroyed the job market by allowing contingent jobs to increase rapidly, making it extremely difficult for people to find jobs with dignity. (2) It has destroyed social services, including the pension schemes and the nursing care system, followed by a major adverse medical "reform". (3) It has imposed a more regressive tax system that forces the

general public to pay more and gives large corporations and the wealthy generous tax breaks.

The Liberal Democratic, Komei, and Democratic parties talk about the social gap but stop short of pointing to its causes. These parties are competing with each other to ease labor law regulations by liberalizing staffing services. They are also in favor of a consumption tax increase that would further widen the social gap.

The JCP is the only party that can criticize the policies that favor large corporations that contribute to the widening of the social gap. The JCP is the only party that has a concrete plan to initiate the resolution of the problem. The economic policy set forth by the JCP Program calls for an economy governed by rules to be established that include a democratic regulation of large corporations, a democratic reform of taxation, fiscal, and social services policies. At no time in the past has this policy meshed so clearly with the present situation and demonstrated its vitality.

The Report to the JCP 24th Congress made clear that the neo-liberal economic policy has turned out to be a failure throughout the world, as clearly demonstrated in Southeast Asia and Latin America. This statement in the report has been vindicated by subsequent developments.

In the presidential election in Peru in April, a candidate critical of neo-liberalism has advanced to a run-off set for next month. In France, three million workers and students from February through April took part in a major concerted action opposing the "first employment contract" (CPE) that would make it easier for companies to dismiss young workers and foiled the bill.

It is important to note that this neo-liberal measure has been rejected in France, a developed capitalist country, by the popular movement which has been relatively successful in demanding worker rights. Japan is often referred to as a country of "capitalism without rules" and is under the attack of neo-liberalism. Given the sharper contradictions we are experiencing in Japan, our struggle should be even greater.

In Europe, after Southeast Asia and Latin America, neo-liberalism has been proven to have no future. Let us take a lead in the struggle to defend the fundamental interests of the people in all areas of social life in line with the JCP Congress's call for social solidarity to defeat the attacks.

(2) On U.S. bases, the Constitution, subservience to the U.S., and the adverse revision of the Fundamental Law of Education

The second point is that the contradictions arising from Japan's extraordinary subservience to the United States have become sharper than ever around the issue of the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan and constitutional revision.

The ongoing U.S. military realignment is an attempt to force Japanese local governments and residents to accept the strengthening of the strike capability of U.S. military bases. Opposition to this outrageousness is growing in the local governments concerned working in unity with the residents.

In Iwakuni City in Yamaguchi Prefecture, citizens in a referendum rejected the plan to transfer a U.S. carrier-borne air-wing to the U.S. Marine Corps Iwakuni Air Station from the U.S. Navy Atsugi Air Facility in Kanagawa Prefecture. In Zama and Sagami-hara cities in Kanagawa Prefecture, local governments and their residents are united in the struggle against the plan to relocate the U.S. 1st Army Corps to Camp Zama from Washington State. Kanoya City and its residents in Kagoshima Prefecture are firmly opposed to the plan to allow the U.S. forces to use the strengthened Self-Defense Force Kanoya base. In Miyazaki Prefecture, Shintomi Town residents held a successful rally in protest against the plan to strengthen the

Self-Defense Force Nyutabaru base. These struggles are of historic significance in that local municipalities led by conservative heads are rising to action in protest against forcing them to pay more for and to coexist with the U.S. military bases.

The local struggle involving residents and local governments is developing in Okinawa to stop the plan to construct a new U.S. Marine Corps base on the coastline of Camp Schwab in Nago City. The government is trying to force the Nago mayor to capitulate and accept the plan to construct a base with two runways, which will be even larger than the initial plan. The government tries to assure the residents that there won't be flights over the residential areas, but Okinawans know that the U.S. forces have never flown their aircraft without violating the unauthorized air space. In a survey 70 percent of the respondents expressed firm opposition to the coastline plan. Local people are increasing their struggle throughout Okinawa calling for the base construction plan to be canceled on the grounds that it reneges on the earlier public promise. Thus, the power balance is tilting in favor of the forces working for peace and social progress

In criticizing the ongoing U.S. military realignment, the JCP will continue to expose the truth about the strengthening of the functions of U.S. military bases. It will also do its utmost to find the common demand of the broadest possible sections of residents and develop the struggle to stop the plan in cooperation with local governments as well as residents.

The United States is pressing Japan to pay the cost of U.S. military realignment, the amount reportedly being 3 trillion yen, which includes 900 billion yen for strengthening the U.S. base in Guam and the remainder for constructing a huge new base in Okinawa as well as strengthening other U.S. bases in Japan. The JCP will continue to oppose the use of any tax money to strengthen the U.S. strike forces.

The ongoing process of U.S. military realignment and the moves for the adverse constitutional revision are closely interwoven. The U.S. military realignment is aiming for strengthening the U.S. bases and setting up a system for U.S. forces and Japan's Self-Defense Forces to fight wars abroad together. The United States has openly, and repeatedly, put pressure on Japan to amend Article 9 of the Constitution regarding that it is the biggest obstacle to what the United States wants to achieve.

James Auer, the former Japan desk at the Pentagon, has said that in implementing the Japan-U.S. agreement on realigning U.S. forces in Japan, it will be necessary for Japan to change its policy concerning the right of collective self-defense. He said that the Japanese foreign minister and defense chief signaled that Japan is prepared to exercise the right of collective self-defense when they agreed on the realignment plan. He added that if Japan says it cannot carry out the agreement, the Japan-U.S. security will face a major crisis. He was so high-handed as to say that Japan's failure to implement the realignment agreement, which is linked to the right of collective self-defense, will have serious consequences.

These developments related to the U.S. military realignment in Japan show clearly that the aim of amending Article 9 is to turn Japan into a country that fights wars abroad together with the United States.

The "Article 9 Association" Movement is developing throughout the country. The association is being formed in places of work as well as in local communities. The campaign to collect signatures in defense of Article 9 from a majority of residents is developing in various parts of the country. In Tosashimizu City in Kochi Prefecture, and in some other municipalities, a majority of the residents has signed the petition. The task now is to make greater efforts to increase the grassroots movement in workplaces, residential areas, and campuses to form a clear majority in favor of the defense of Article 9.

Let us not lose time in increasing the struggle to stop the adverse revision of the Fundamental Law of Education

The bill to adversely revise the Fundamental Law of Education is likely to be introduced in

the current session of the Diet [*]. The ruling parties have agreed on a revised text of the Law. It calls for the law's Article 10, which provides that "education shall not be subject to improper control, but shall be directly responsible to the people" to be changed. This provision will allow state power to interfere with education. It amounts to destroying the democratic principles of education established after a remorse for the system of education that was used to send students to wars.

The revision proposed by the ruling parties includes nurturing students' "love of the country" as part of the objectives of education. The JCP has insisted on the importance of an education that helps students to understand citizens' democratic rights and responsibilities. The JCP 21st Congress decisions set forth 10 points, including one that calls for efforts "to cultivate true patriotism and friendship with other nations, with no hostility toward other nations." It also states, "These are part of the natural implementation of the Constitution's democratic principles and the Fundamental Law of Education."

The attempt to revise the Fundamental Law of Education to define the attitude of love for the country is directly linked to the effort to turn Japan into a country that "can fight wars abroad." It is exactly what the adverse constitutional revision aims to achieve and change Japan's education into one for rearing children as citizens able and willing to serve a country that goes to war. If the Fundamental Law of Education is revised and children are required to have love for the country, its Article 10 (that bans state power from interfering with education) will be amended to enable particular political views to be imposed on schools in flagrant violation of the constitutional freedom of conscience. This is apparent from recent events related to the issue of the Hinomaru (Rising Sun) flag and song Kimigayo (may the imperial reign be forever). The government promise in the Diet that schools will not be forced to unfurl the Hinomaru flag or to sing Kimigayo is being broken in many places. The task now is to rapidly increase the movement to stop the adverse revision of the Fundamental Law of Education.

It is time for the JCP to exert its full power in the struggle to stop the strengthening of the functions of U.S. bases in Japan in the name of "realignment." It is time for us to stop the adverse revision of the Constitution, and the adverse revision of the Fundamental Law of Education. In these struggles we will rally a majority of the people in defense of peace and democracy.

[*] The bill to adversely revised Fundamental law of Education became law on December 15, 2006 in the 165th Extraordinary Session of the Diet.

(3) New developments related to political parties and the JCP's role

Thirdly, I want to talk about the new developments related to political parties and the JCP's role.

Following a "fake e-mail" fiasco, the Democratic Party of Japan started a new leadership lineup led by OZAWA Ichiro.

Shouting for a political power change, Ozawa as its new president is selling the DPJ as the viable alternative to the LDP, but he does not give any clear definition of the "alternative." For example, while blaming Koizumi politics for the growing social disparities, he calls for the deregulation policy to be maintained despite the fact that it is the principal cause of growing social disparities. In fact, the first item in his 8-point platform in the DPJ presidential election was a proposal that consumption tax revenue be used to fund the basic portions of costs for pensions, nursing care, and medical services for the elderly. He is thus publicly advocating the use of the consumption tax which is contributing to widening the gap between rich and poor.

Ozawa also calls for Japan to be allowed to use force abroad if it participates in international action authorized by the United Nations. His view is similar to that of the LDP calling for Japan to become a country that can fight wars abroad.

When the House of Representatives took a vote on a set of five bills about “administrative reform” aimed at reducing the number of government employees, the DPJ countered the LDP by proposing a deeper job cut. It also supported four other bills, including the “market testing” bill to allow the private sector to take part in bids for public services. All this shows clearly that the DPJ is competing with the LDP for more government job cuts. In the first test of the Ozawa leadership, the DPJ position on these important bills shows that the DPJ is identical with the LDP instead of being confrontational.

Thus, Ozawa’s insistence that his party is capable of putting forward the viable alternative to LDP politics is no more than a rhetoric. It is a typical way of deceiving the public by deliberately creating an illusion about a “confrontation” that does not exist, in order to pave the way for a two-party system. It is important to expose this trick and counter this move.

The frequent leadership changes taking place in the DPJ and the fake e-mail scandal are examples that show how unstable and uncertain the DPJ is. This is closely connected with the fact that the DPJ’s basic position is no different from the LDP’s because both parties adhere to the old framework of LDP policies serving the interests of the United States and large corporations.

The JCP has a programmatic line for fundamentally moving away from LDP policies. It strives to defend the interests of the people. The JCP as the only truly reliable opposition party has an increasingly important role to play.

Today, the old framework of LDP politics is in a no-way-out situation on all issues, including people’s living conditions, peace, and the viability of political parties. We are in the midst of a legitimacy crisis in which it is possible to bring about a major change depending on our efforts. It’s time for the party to fully expose this crisis of legitimacy. Let us take confidence in this possibility, and reach out to as many people as possible. Let us take a lead in this struggle, discussing the role of politics and the JCP.

III In Our View, Present-day Japanese Society Calls for a Change in Workplace Situation

Next, I will touch upon the present state of workplaces.

In Japan, where capitalism without rules is prevailing, workplace rules are grossly ignored. The laws regulating dismissals, overtime work, paid holidays, employment insurance, women’s equality, and equal treatment of all workers of all categories are either non-existent or very weakly enforced.

In addition, in the second half of the 1990s, large corporations began to “restructure” themselves helped by LDP government policies that promote neo-liberal economic arguments to assist them. This has contributed to rapidly worsening working conditions and the job market in general and has in fact threatened the future of Japan’s society and economy.

The corporate strategy for workplace control consists of the following two main tactics:

(1) A rapid rise in the number of contingent workers who are low-paid and without rights

Employers are replacing on a large scale full-time workers with low-paid contingent workers who are low-paid and left without basic worker rights.

In the past 10 years, while the number of full-time jobs has decreased by 3.95 million, that of contingent workers increased by 5.93 million. This means that one in three workers (and one in two young people or women regardless of age) is a part-time or contingent worker. Such

replacement of full-time workers by contingent workers is taking place not only in large corporations in the private sector but in places of work in local governments and public schools.

Contingent workers are extremely low paid and discriminated against. They are denied basic worker rights. A government survey shows that about 80 percent of contingent workers earn less than 1.5 million yen (approx. 12,000 US dollars) a year and therefore are unable to secure even the minimum cost of living. Although contingent workers in many cases have the same responsibilities as full-time workers, they are not given leave of absences to attend funerals or paid personal holidays. They do not have social insurance. They are in constant fear of being dismissed. They are also being discriminated against in benefits, including meal subsidies. This is how contingent workers are severely discriminated against.

Workers are used as disposables in workplaces where flagrant violations of the labor laws are prevalent. A Tokyo Labor Bureau survey shows that violations of labor laws were found in 81.2 percent of the staffing agencies surveyed, and in 76.5 percent of firms staffing workers as contract workers. The report says guidelines are necessary to correct these improper practices.

The Crystal Group is a temporary staffing agency that provides the largest number of workers for large companies. Its president publicly announced that his company believes that “the company can break laws if it is to survive the competition and becomes number one in any given sector,” and that “it can tell lies unless they will not offend a third person.” Interviews we conducted in preparation for this meeting show that lawlessness is prevalent everywhere throughout the country.

The sharp increase in the number of low-paid temporary workers without basic worker rights is a recent cause of the widening income gap and the increasing poverty rate. It will undermine the group of active workers who must pay the premiums for funding social services, including pensions and medical services. It will also accelerate the declines in birth rates. These moves will make it difficult to achieve a sound development of Japanese society and economy in the future.

(2) Performance-based wage system is worsening work situation

The other tactic used is the further exploitation of full-time workers through a performance-based pay system. Worsening working conditions are putting workers further at risk.

The performance-based wage system began to be introduced widely in the mid-1990s. About 90 percent of the listed companies have introduced the performance-based pay system, followed by public services, including public schools. It is being applied to not only workers in managerial jobs but also workers in general. Even in the United States, the performance-based pay system is not applied to workers in general.

In our interviews with workers throughout the country, we heard many workers talk about the extraordinary adverse effects of performance-based labor management. Let me cite some characteristic features.

Wage cuts

Under the performance-based pay system, even if a worker has 100 percent fulfilled his or her goals, that worker can receive no more than the average wages, and most workers who have been unable to fulfill their promises get pay cuts. This is a system that generally holds down wages regardless of age. This consequence is inevitable because the system has been introduced with the aim of reducing overall personnel costs.

Too heavy work loads and long working hours

Workers are obliged to work extra hours because they are forced to produce results.

However, if they report their extra hours, they may get low ratings on their job performance on the grounds that they had to do overtime work because of inferior performance. This discourages workers from reporting their overtime work. This is the most typical cause of unpaid overtime work.

If the performance-based pay system is introduced along with the discretionary work schedule system, workers will be forced to work long hours without limits.

Lives and health at risk and mental health problem increases

Coupled with long hours of work and heavy workloads, the performance-based wage system is driving workers into competition among themselves under stronger labor management control over individual workers, increasing job stress and undermining their health, both mentally and physically. This is how the number of deaths at work from overwork (*karoshi*) is increasing. Increasingly, workplaces are destroying healthy human relations, and the number of workers with mental health problems is increasing dramatically. This is a major problem in most workplaces.

Problems facing public service workers and public school teachers

If public service workers and teachers are placed under this method of managing workplaces, it will mean not only worsening workers' health conditions but also making public services untenable because employees will not be able to concentrate on the well-being of the residents, including children.

Local government employees in Kanagawa revealed that workplaces will get higher marks in the present rating system if they carry out restructuring schemes such as the privatization of childcare centers and cutbacks in welfare services."

Public school teachers in Fukuoka said, "We are being driven into competition to reduce the rate of absentee students. However, teachers are so busy setting goals, making self-evaluation, and reporting to their superiors that it is very difficult to take care of students. As a consequence, they tend to pay greater attention to the needs of their superiors than to students when they make plans and set goals. Teachers become more involved in competition with each other instead of trying to cooperate with each other, making schools more cold desolate."

Reading the findings, I acutely feel that if Japan continues to stay the course, its society as well as economy will be ruined. The urgent need now is to inform as many people as possible that business circles and large corporations are destroying the employment system by replacing full-time workers with contingent workers and introducing the performance-based wage system, causing serious problems to every aspect of workers' lives, and that this outrageous and lawless workplace management should be ended. The JCP will do its utmost to bring about this end.

(3) Three viewpoints for grasping workplace contradictions

I have talked about the worsening working conditions in our country. There are several important viewpoints from which to understand the contradictions in workplaces.

There are serious contradictions that may undermine corporate control of workplaces

First, these attacks on workers are not only deepening the contradictions between workers and the general public, but are also generating another contradiction that may undermine corporate control over workplaces. One estimate shows that financial losses arising from mental health problems at workplaces cost employers one trillion yen a year. Frequent severe work-related accidents and disasters are a matter of serious concern. There is also difficulty in passing on manufacturing skills to young workers, resulting in the deterioration of quality of products. The number of car recalls is rising at major automakers such as Toyota Motor Corporation and Mitsubishi Motors. A fatal train derailment occurred in Amagasaki on a JR West Japan Line.

Japan Airlines has had an increasing number of accidents and mishaps. These accidents that threaten the safety of transportation are a matter of serious social concern.

The Japan Business Federation (Nippon Keidanren) publishes its annual "Position Paper" on management and human resources that is compiled every year by the Keidanren Committee on Management and Labor Policy. The report reflects business circles' sense of crisis over the present situation.

The 2004 edition of the report states, "Large industrial accidents occurred at many of those factories that seldom had such experiences before. It is pointed out that these accidents should be due to the decline in the number of workers with manufacturing skills." The question is who have encouraged companies to carry out workforce reductions and put emphasis on "merit-oriented" management? At any rate, Nippon Keidanren has become obliged to acknowledge the adverse consequences of the policy it has called for.

The 2006 edition of the Keidanren "Position Paper" stated that mental health problems at workplaces not only affect the employees themselves but result in declines in efficiency at workplaces and workers' morale and that this is a serious matter of management concern. It also states that you cannot expect growth in productivity and ability to solve problems in workplaces with wretched conditions that lack decent human relations. How can they talk like that when they are responsible for the "wretched workplace conditions in the first place"? That said, between the lines we can read a sense of crisis that business circles are experiencing.

A government survey shows that only 15.9 percent of the companies that have introduced the performance-based wage system say they are doing fine with it. Some companies are beginning to modify it. It is important to take a hard look at the contradiction that the harsh corporate control of workers is actually weakening its own dominance over workers.

Break with status quo is possible only through struggle of workers and people

The second point is that the government and business circles are reluctant to move away from their present policy of increasing exploitation by destroying humane working conditions. We need to keep an eye open for Nippon Keidanren calls for further adverse labor law revisions.

In my Central Committee Report to the JCP 24th Congress, we called for an effort to expose and frustrate the ongoing moves of the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry to revise the labor laws. In its final report published in September 2005, the ministry's "Team for Studying Legislation on Future Labor Contracts" proposed a number of adverse revisions of labor laws. They include: Establishment of a "labor-management committee" that can arbitrarily worsen working conditions; introduction of a monetary settlement scheme for dismissals, which will in effect give employers the freedom to fire workers and deregulation of working hours to force white-collar workers to work overtime without pay. These measures would destroy the present labor laws. The JCP Congress called for the unity of all unions regardless of national affiliation in order to defeat these attacks.

Later, the Labor Policy Council, an advisory panel to the Health, Labor, and Welfare minister, began discussing issues touched on in the final report. It is alarming that there are moves to finalize to bill for submission to the Ordinary Session of the Diet next year.

Business circles and large corporations have no intention to voluntarily rectify the way they control places of work no matter how it is going wrong, or no matter how it is eroding the foundation of their domination of workplaces. This reminds us of the statement in Karl Marx's *Capital*, "Hence Capital is reckless of the health or length of life of the labourer, unless under compulsion from society" (Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, Part III, Chap. X. "The Working Day", section 5, page 257). The only way to solve the problem of worsening workplace conditions is to develop the struggle of workers. Let us keep this in mind by increasing our own efforts.

Improving workplaces is inseparable from changing politics

The third point I want to emphasize is that at no other time has it been easier to see the connection between attacks on workers by business circles and large corporations and the role of the LDP government.

The LDP government has assisted corporations with job cuts in the name of corporate restructuring. It has adversely amended laws to make it easier for corporations to sell off non-profitable businesses and establish holding companies by amending labor laws to ease restrictions on the use of temporary workers, thus further destroying work rules.

In 1999, a major labor law reform in principle allowed employers to use temporary workers not only for professional work but for clerical work in general. All parties except the JCP voted in favor of the adverse revision.

The ongoing attacks on government and other public service employees provide a stage of competition for the LDP and the DPJ. The government and the ruling parties have submitted a bill to reduce the number of national government employees by 5 percent and local government employees by 4.6 percent. The DPJ has proposed a bill calling for even sharper cuts. It says that the total labor cost for national government employees should be reduced by 20 percent in three years. The DPJ also calls for the introduction of a system of rating employees with the aim of disqualifying targeted employees.

Let us explain to as many workers as possible that the LDP's misgovernment is the source of the difficulties they are experiencing at home and in workplaces and that changing the role of politics is inseparable from improving workplaces.

Putting an end to the serious conditions surrounding the working class, who account for 80 percent of Japan's population, is very important at present and in the future. I want to emphasize that the JCP and its workplace branches have an indispensable role to play in this regard.

IV

'Policies and Plans' Strengthen JCP Workplace Branches

Next, I want to talk about how we can strengthen the activities of JCP workplace branches under these circumstances.

In order to increase workplace branch activities, we will follow the JCP Congress decision to organize activities by establishing "policies and plans." What is the way for every workplace branch to participate in party activities voluntarily and with awareness by establishing their own "policies and plans"? I would like to deal with this question by touching on the lessons we have learned from our contacts with many party members throughout the country.

(1) Improve our day-to-day relations with co-workers in the workplace and establish mutual trust with them

The first point I want to stress is the importance of improving our day-to-day relations with co-workers in the workplace to establish mutual trust with them.

Departure from the notion that making "policies and plans" is a difficult task is important. The bottom line is that we need on a day-to-day basis to have ties with workers to build personal relations of mutual trust and respect.

The JCP 24th Congress Resolution stressed this point: "To maintain deeper ties on a day-to-day basis with people around the JCP branch is a source of the party's vitality, not a mere instrument for various activities. Special attention must be paid to these ties as the JCP's basic style. This point of view is important particularly at workplaces in which capital's control of workers is driving a wedge between the

workers themselves.

Reports from around the country show that successful workplace branches are without exception always trying to create ties with workers and establish relations of mutual trust. I want to talk about some of these examples which we feel are important.

Everything begins with everyday greetings

The first point is that everything begins with warm greetings.

A JCP workplace branch at a publishing company has reported: “A branch member said he was impressed by a Congress delegate from a rural area speaking about the importance of people receiving our visits by saying, ‘How about a cup of tea?’ or ‘You can take these vegetables.’ This convinced him of the need to change his attitude towards people around him. He has decided to give a nod greeting to people who he has never done so, and to say, ‘Good morning’ to people who he has given a nod. This is the effort he began to make in order to be able to have conversation with people around him so that he could call on them to vote for the JCP or become *Akahata* subscribers.”

A JCP workplace branch in the private sector in Hokkaido gave the following report: “The branch has decided to implement three things as part of its “policies and plans”. (1) Cheerfully greet co-workers at the workplace, (2) Notify the branch of absences from the branch meeting without fail, and (3) Make use of sample copies of *Akahata* provided to branch members once a month. Although branch members used to complain about the exhaustion they experienced every day due to cost-cutting schemes, they improved their relations with co-workers after six months of implementation of this decision. They have strengthened party unity and increased the *Akahata* readership by 30 percent for the daily and by nearly 30 percent for the weekly *Sunday Akahata* from the last JCP Congress.

It is impressive that “exchanging cheerful greetings” is placed on top of the branch tasks. This branch does not put emphasis on 100 percent attendance at the branch meeting; it instead requires its members to notify the branch of their absence. This reflects the need for flexibility and a realistic approach.

Socialize with workers during off hours

The second point is the need for JCP branch members to socialize with co-workers if possible.

A JCP branch at a large private sector corporation in Osaka reported: “We make it a rule to share all aspects of workers’ life. We hold informal discussions every two or three weeks. We also organize a barbecue parties, a cherry blossom viewing party, and fishing get-togethers. We call on those party members who do not participate in party activities to come to these events. A young man who participated in three of our events joined the JCP last year.”

We have received many other reports about similar efforts.

JCP members share their suffering with all other workers

The third point is that we need to make clear the basis on which JCP members have good relations with other co-workers.

It was impressive to find in our interviews that JCP members are also workers suffering from the performance-based management system that forces long-hours of work and heavy workloads on workers and causes mental health problems. Party members are also suffering and hurting. One party member’s suffering is a suffering of all workers. This is why JCP members and non-JCP co-workers can unite. I think it is essential to grasp this aspect of solidarity.

(2) Our policymaking effort begins with understanding workers' pressing needs

Let me go on to the question of policymaking.

I want to stress that making policies in response to people's needs is not a difficult task. On any question, the way to start is from addressing the workers' keen demands. This was what we clearly realized as we conducted the survey.

We received the following report from a JCP medical workers' branch in Osaka: "At the branch meeting we decided that each member will talk to at least one co-worker and report on the results at the next meeting. At the next meeting, we realized that workers have diverse demands, ranging from those job-related demands to difficulties in taking care of their children and in finding jobs with decent wages for their sons and daughters. We were able to find the direction for our work on policies and plans." This example shows how a branch can formulate its policies and plans. Addressing local needs and concerns is important.

The Central Committee Report to the JCP 24th Congress states: "In formulating 'policies', the first thing to do is to take up the workers' pressing needs at their places of work. The point is that JCP branches should take up concrete problems that can unite all workers, problems that leave no room for collaborationist unions or employers to dispute."

Branches can make their "policies" if they learn about workers' concerns and determine the most urgent demands so they can act together.

Based on our survey, I want to talk about several points that will be of help in making your policies in various regions throughout the country.

Struggle against performance-based control of workplaces

The first point is how to carry out the struggle against the performance-based control of workplaces.

In the course of the survey, we heard many complain about their inability to find an effective way to struggle against the performance-based system's control of the workplace and its harmful effects. I want you to discuss this question in depth in this meeting. I think that the first thing to do before beginning to organize the struggle is to learn the details of the actual sufferings and contradictions brought about by the performance-based management system.

A JCP branch at a large chemical manufacturer has reported about its success in a union election. Taking up the issue of the performance-based pay system which the company introduced as a way to best reward those who have done their best, the branch asked workers if they had been rewarded after doing their utmost. This way of campaigning contributed to a branch advance.

In introducing the performance-based pay system, companies try to create the illusion among workers that this is a system that rewards them for good job performance. However, workers soon realized that they were deceived. Contrary to the promise that it will lead to a pay raise, their wages declined. Workers doubt that the evaluation of job performance is impartial. They are now worried about their health because they are forced to work long hours. These were workers' responses to the question: "Have you been rewarded?" I think it is essential for JCP branches to join with workers in the workplace to struggle to realize their demands.

Demanding an across-the-board wage increase is very important in forcing employers to redress the performance-based pay system. At a large electronics company, the trade union affiliated with the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo) in the 2006 Spring Struggle demanded that the company give a fair share of the pay raise to all workers there. In a workshop meeting a JCP member spoke in favor of the demand and encouraged the union leadership to achieve the demand. The union official was surprised at the unexpected support from the JCP member who, in his eyes, had always objected to union policy. The JCP branch move was

received favorably by many workers there.

Performance-based pay is a discriminatory and divisive wage system. Criticism is growing rapidly of the widening wage gap even between full-time workers. In these circumstances, I believe that the demand for an across-the-board pay raise that will narrow the gap matches the feelings of workers in general. I think that the demand will help rectify and gut the performance-based pay system.

It is also important to demand that “workers under the performance-based pay system” have access to the company evaluation of their job performance. Job performance evaluation by nature is subjective and arbitrary. If it is made available to workers, its absurdity will be revealed. Each individual worker’s demand for access to their job performance evaluation should pave the way for building the unity of all workers in the workplace to demand that the results of evaluations should be made available to every worker. Workers should also have the right to raise an objection to the evaluation while the union should be allowed to exercise a right to intervene in this affair, in order to ensure that evaluations are objective and impartial.

In local governments, we should reveal the fact that the performance-based pay system is closely connected with the policy of cutting back on services that residents need in their day-to-day lives, a policy that amounts to neglect of the local administration’s duty to serve the residents’ well-being. In public schools, it is important to develop the struggle based on teachers’ wishes to provide “quality education” and by exposing the fact that the performance-based wage system will make it extremely difficult for teachers to pay attention to the needs of each child.

To advance the struggle in the workplace based on workers’ demands, it is essential to make known to the workers and the general public the harmful effects of the performance-based wage system, such as wage cuts, long hours of work, heavy workloads, and health damage, including mental health problems and work-related accidents. We will increase our effort to raise this issue in parliamentary discussions and use *Akahata* to expose the adverse effect of the performance-based pay system.

Let us do our utmost to expose the danger of the performance-based wage system and arouse public criticism while at the same time carry out the struggle for workers’ demands in the workplaces in order to get the present wage system overhauled.

How to promote contingent workers’ participation in the struggle?

Secondly, I want to deal with the question how to organize contingent workers.

In most cases, employers are forcing contingent workers to endure wretched working conditions in violation of labor laws. This makes it imperative for us to develop the struggle to eradicate lawlessness in the workplace.

In February and April (2006), An NHK daily TV program featuring people’s daily lives focused on “living on an annual income of 2 million yen under widening social disparities.” It reported about a young woman contract employee struggling to make ends meet with an annual income of 1.8 million yen. A college graduate who speaks German, she works for a travel agency. She is extremely low-paid and lives in a very small room about 10 square meters with no bathroom. In order to save money without having to pay for utilities, she does not use a heater in the winter. She instead tries to keep warm by wearing extra clothes that her friends gave her.

But she is not a lone woman. The TV program next showed scenes of her participation in the Tokyo Metropolitan Youth Union. Focusing on her activity in the union, the narrator said: “This union is opened to any individual, whether they are full-time workers or not, and regardless of type of employment or job category. It receives about 150 inquiries and questions a year. Many of inquiries are about violations of laws due to unpaid overtime work or refusal to allow employees to use their paid holidays. During the past year, the union held collective bargaining

negotiations with 44 companies and won an improvement in working conditions in 90 percent of the cases.

I hear that the program that was aired in February had great repercussions and a sequel was broadcast in April. Young people are rising to the struggle to eliminate lawlessness in workplaces. We believe that this movement has a promising future.

On this question, one important task is for full-time workers to reach out to contingent workers. In our survey, we found that many JCP workplace branches comprised mostly of full-time workers have reported from around the country that they have worked together with part-time workers and other contingent workers to break the status quo concerning the contingent workers' problems. Many contingent workers are in such unstable conditions they are afraid to complain about their working conditions in their workplaces. They would be told to "stop complaining or quit" Their contracts will not be renewed if they complain about their working conditions. In these circumstances, contingent workers cannot even propose improving the operational procedure, much less request an improvement in working conditions. In one case, a worker sent in by a temporary staffing agency was denied a renewal of the contract just because she spoke English better than her superior. In such circumstances, a JCP member at a workplace encouraged temporary workers to tell him about whatever problems they have so that he can speak to the company for them. This turned out to be effective in improving the working conditions and increasing workers' trust in the JCP.

The JCP workplace branch at a large corporation in Hyogo Prefecture had an interesting experience in dealing with a problem that a young worker needed to solve. The worker came to the JCP branch for help because he was not even allowed to use his paid holidays and was not paid for his overtime work. The party branch took up the problem in the workplace. Most of the full-time workers in the workplace, including those in managerial positions, agreed that the company's working conditions make it difficult to pass on manufacturing skills to young workers. They insisted that such working conditions must change because continuing with these working conditions will worsen the quality of the products. They brought in the case to the local Labor Standards Inspection Office, and succeeded in having the company improve the working conditions. I think that this tells us how important it is to raise these kinds of issues in the workplace so that the struggle for improvement of working conditions can involve all workers in the workplace.

In such efforts, it is very important that the demands for improvement of contingent workers' working conditions be dealt with by all workers in the workplace. The effort to improve the working conditions for contingent workers will be effective also to improve the full-time workers' working conditions. To put an end to discrimination against contingent workers and diminish disparities will help establish better human relations in places of work. Even workers in managerial positions are insisting that temporary workers should be hired as full-time workers in order to prevent work-related accidents. We must be attentive to this point and develop the movement into one that involves all workers in the workplace.

It is also necessary to advance the movement by developing cooperation between workplaces and corresponding local communities. In the survey, we found many examples of successful cooperation in the effort to achieve improvements in working conditions as well as stable jobs for contingent workers. There are two types of cooperation in this regard. One is between the JCP workplace branches and the local JCP (its local bodies, local assembly members, branches in residential areas, youth branches, and local Democratic Youth League branches) that are involved in activities to help people solve problems related to work and living conditions. The other is between regional trade unions affiliated with the National Confederation of Trade Unions (Zenroren) and the corresponding JCP workplace branches.

At a time when contingent workers account for one-third of the Japanese workforce, it is very important to struggle to drastically improve their working conditions, eliminate lawlessness in places of work, increase job security, and establish regulations for equal treatment. This struggle has an important bearing on the future of Japanese society. It is a task that worker members of the JCP, JCP workplace branches, and local JCP bodies are called upon

to address seriously.

How to fight attacks against government employees

The third point I want to make is how we should fight attacks on government and public service employees.

As we emphasized in the JCP 24th Congress decision, the struggle to stop the attacks against government, including major cuts in the number of government employees as well as pay cuts is very important in the economic and political confrontation over the well-being of the working class. It is particularly important to make known to the general public that these attacks are not only aimed at government employees but at the safety and living conditions of all residents, and to hold fast to the commitment to defeating them through a struggle in solidarity with local residents and the general public. In our survey, we learned that there are courageous struggles taking place in various parts of the country.

There are a number of examples in which JCP members and trade unions, in cooperation with residents, have organized “associations to defend local medical services” and successfully foiled or modified plans to close down, consolidate, or privatize local public hospitals.

Moves towards privatizing public childcare facilities are also under way in many municipalities throughout the country. JCP members are working in cooperation with trade unions, parents, and residents in associations for quality childcare. By developing the movement together with residents, they have succeeded in having local administrations change their attitudes.

There was a report about a movement that succeeded in forcing the local government to revoke its decision to use a private sector catering service for school lunches. JCP members established an association for better school lunches in cooperation with trade unions, parents, and a network of parents with allergic children. The movement called for school lunches to be prepared in school kitchens where the cooking staff is proud of their hot, delicious, nutritious, and safe meals.

I was impressed to hear that a JCP member who is a public service employee in Tokyo made the following statement at a JCP district meeting: “No public employee can be described in an abstract way. Each public employee has their specific jobs in education, childcare and welfare services, including instructors at after-school facilities like myself. I’m convinced that if the roles of these workers with specific jobs are seen to be related with the keen demands of residents, we can exert great power to repel these attacks against public service employees.”

I felt that this holds the key to repelling the attacks. Those forces that attack government and public service employees describe them as an abstract group of privileged employees, and they are calling for the number of public service employees to be reduced on the grounds that they are responsible for making fiscal conditions more difficult. However, individual public employees are working people serving residents’ interests, and the question here is whether it is good to eliminate jobs that serve public well-being. Let us raise this question before the public and repel these attacks.

Defeat wrong thinking of forcing workers and people to suffer more

Fourthly, if we are to further develop this struggle, it is essential to overcome the erroneous ideology that justifies shifting the hardships onto the workers and the general public.

The thread that runs through neo-liberalism is a divide-and-rule tactic, which is a stock in trade used to drive a wedge between full-time workers and contingent workers. It also drives full-time private-sector workers and full-time public service employees into competition with each other in order to be rewarded as a result of efforts under the performance-based labor management, an illusion. Workers who refuse to take part in such competition are told to take

responsibility for their own failure. The JCP has a very important role to play in defeating these divisive attacks and developing solidarity and unity among all workers.

The Central Committee Report to the JCP 24th Congress called for the “social struggle to repel the attacks on the people.” I want to stress here that the working class is called upon to organize as the core of solidarity in society.

(3) On making plans: Prepare successors and reach out to every worker

Let me move on to the task of carrying out activities with “plans.”

Making “plans” means making clear how JCP branches at workplaces should achieve their political goals and define what kind of party is required to achieve workers’ demands. It is about an effort to strengthen the JCP qualitatively and to increase the JCP membership and *Akahata* readership. It is also important to include an action policy for strengthening the JCP Supporters’ Associations and finding ways to cooperate with their members.

How to prepare successors

First, I want to talk about how to prepare successors. Most JCP branches at workplaces are anxious to ensure that they will continue to develop in the future. We will devote ourselves to fulfill this task by putting our energy to attract as many young people as possible to join, including those in their 30s and 40s.

Our survey shows that many branches have difficulty in achieving this. While this is a point that I want you to discuss with you in this seminar, I would like to mention several points, which we have learned from the survey.

It is important to start from the basic demands of young people for jobs, solidarity, and peace, and to try to understand the problems they want to solve. As I said in the concluding remarks at the JCP 24th Congress, “young people are doubly suffering” in that they are not only deprived of decent jobs but are forced to accept the blame for the failure. I think our heart-to-heart exchanges with young people should begin by showing our concern for their problems.

A member of a JCP branch at a school said each branch member is trying to reach out to colleagues in the workplace and listen to them talk about their troubles, even if they cannot be role models. I think it a flexible and realistic approach. Schools have so many problems and difficulties. Although it will be hard for JCP branch members to offer to become “role models,” they may be able at least to listen to other teachers talk about their problems. A branch member said that when they told teachers with problems to stop being put out by the problems because the problem is not with them but with government policy, some teachers hearing this would actually cry. He said that some of these teachers said that the warm words helped them regain confidence themselves, and that others began to trust in JCP members and even decided to join the JCP.

It is particularly important to pay attention to young people’s desire to find a job worth doing. You might talk about your pride in the work that you are doing and about the sense of fulfillment that you have in your work, while handing down your expertise and professional skills to young workers in the workplace.

A JCP branch at a school reported that the teachers’ union held a “teachers’ workshop”. The lectures perfectly matched newly employed teachers’ anxieties about how they should teach, and that many young teachers joined the teachers’ union.

A report from a JCP branch in a local government office said that many new recruits who responded to a survey said that they want to work in the interest of the residents. We should pay attention to and support their interests so that we can have heart-to-heart communication with them. One report stated that in the effort to increase the JCP membership, the branch places

importance on holding meetings for workers to learn about the JCP. The report stated that young workers with two or three years of service have joined the JCP.

As to how we should increase and prepare successors seems to be a difficult question for any JCP branch. I hope that you will deepen the discussion of this issue in this seminar.

Reach out to all workers with different union memberships

The next point I want to stress is the importance of reaching out to workers irrespective of union affiliation.

It is important that JCP workplace branches play an active role in advancing the trade union movement while making efforts to reach out to all workers. Political parties are different from trade unions in character and aim. Party-building efforts and advancing the trade union movement are inter-related, but different efforts are required.

That is, once a JCP branch is set up in a workplace, whether it is with the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo) or the National Confederation of Trade Unions (Zenroren), among unorganized workers, full-time workers, or non-regular workers, it should take root there and help to develop the JCP organization. We should bear in mind that the network of JCP organizations will develop into a network of solidarity of workers in the workplace.

We will work with the “Article 9 Associations” and the “Association for Progressive Change for Peace and Democracy” (Kakushinkon) from a similar point of view in a way appropriate to their needs and demands.

It is very important that the Article 9 Association is being organized in many workplaces throughout the country with workers regardless of national labor and even including managerial people to develop the movement to defend peace. The JCP wants to contribute to making this current for peace stronger.

The effort to strengthen the Kakushinkon movement at workplaces is also important. More than 170 workplace Kakushinkon forums have been established throughout the country, and they are developing activities in various ways. Unlike trade unions, Kakushinkon carries out activities in response to the various demands of workers and the general public and to help form a united front with the JCP and non-party people working for the three goals of progress. This is why Kakushinkon can freely carry out activities concerning many kinds of questions, ranging from working conditions at workplaces to politics in Japan as well as international issues, regardless of trade union affiliation.

The Kakushinkon movement is important in workplaces with a union affiliated with Zenroren. Although Zenroren is a Kakushinkon member, this does not necessarily mean that all Zenroren member unions are directed toward social progress. The Kakushinkon movement has a major role to play in the workplace in increase support for their “three goals of progress.”

JCP workplace branches should include in their “policies and plans” work for the Kakushinkon movement at the workplace. I know that some say that a workplace Kakushinkon cannot be organized by one JCP branch alone. But there can be a variety of approaches to the establishment of a workplace Kakushinkon. In Kanagawa Prefecture, for example, there is a move under way toward creating Kakushinkon by region and by industry. In Kawasaki City, workers at electronics makers NEC, Toshiba, Fujitsu, and Sony have joined together to found the Kawasaki Electronics Workers’ Kakushinkon. In Fujisawa City, large corporations and municipal government employees have set up a cross-region workplace Kakushinkon that covers a number of districts. This approach gives us a fresh perspective and is very instructive.

Have JCP take deep root in workplaces

Next, I would like to touch upon the need to build JCP branches that are deeply involved in workplace affairs.

Our survey shows that some JCP members are reluctant to recruit party members because they do not want new members to experience the kind of difficulties they are facing now. I think we should look at this problem from two viewpoints.

One is that JCP members should be proud of the hardships they are dealing with at present; they should talk about the meaning of their being workers and JCP members at the same time. A JCP workplace branch at a large company in Saitama Prefecture has reported that some of its members questioned whether it is good for the JCP to recruit young workers only to expose them to harsh discrimination, but that others said that many JCP members don't regret joining the party and stressed the need to break down their 'inner barriers' when they appeal to workers. After the discussion, the JCP branch decided to include in its "policies and plans" a proposal to increase the number of JCP members by the time of the next branch general meeting.

The other point that I want to stress is that JCP members' activities need not be uniform. Some members will identify or virtually identify themselves as JCP members in carrying out activities; others can take part in various activities without publicly identifying themselves. Party members share various tasks among themselves according to their respective conditions. In this respect, it is important to maintain a broad perspective and have the JCP branch be closely involved with the workplace.

Akahata is key part of branch activities

In our survey, we learned that many branches are publishing their newsletters regularly and that they are welcomed by co-workers for playing a role of uniting workers. I think that this is a very valuable effort that should be maintained and even increased.

At the same time, I want to stress the importance of defining activities with *Akahata* as an essential part of the JCP branch activity.

The secretary of the JCP Chiyoda District Committee, which is responsible for a district that has many public sector corporations as well as national government offices in central Tokyo, said: "Frankly, our party organization is in a state of crisis that raises questions as to whether it can continue to exist. Preoccupied with this problem, some key branch members feel that it is very difficult to increase the branch work to increase *Akahata* readership. We are now discussing the indispensable role that *Akahata* is plays in workplaces." The discussion is about (1) changing politics that will help change the workplace, and increasing *Akahata* readership as the key and (2) *Akahata* as the best media source to refute the distortions disseminated by business circles and the government.

The JCP workplace branch at a large corporation in the district in its "policies and plans" made it clear that it will increase the *Akahata* readership every month. Since then, the branch has won new subscribers for 65 successive months. They say that they are carrying out activities with two slogans: "Change politics and change workplaces" and "Make use of every tie we have throughout the country to win new *Akahata* subscribers." They say that the working class accounts for 80 percent of Japan's population, making it possible for us to use the power of working-class solidarity to increase the *Akahata* readership.

I want to call on all workplace branches to increase their activities with *Akahata* by learning lessons from these advanced experiences.

(4) Study and establish regular party life to set good examples of JCP

Let me move on to the task of establishing study activities as well as party life. JCP workplace branches are adversely affected by the policies of the Liberal Democratic Party government and are also under capitalist control of workplaces, doubling the contradictions and difficulties. All the more because of this, JCP workplace branches need to give a good example of building up a party that represents workers' interests..

The key to overcoming difficulties is study of JCP Program and having regular branch meeting

Studying the JCP Program and holding branch meetings regularly is the key to achieving this goal. Our survey shows that many branches have difficulty in holding branch meetings regularly due to hectic workdays with long working hours and heavy workloads. At the same time, many talked about the importance of party building efforts although they are aware that it is not an easy task.

We've got an interesting report from a branch at a private sector workplace in Hokkaido. It states: "The weekly branch meeting gives us valuable time for us to recover our humanity. One branch member said, 'We can continue to do our best thanks to the branch meetings, a source of energy produced through discussion in which we can relate to each other's mental and physical condition. Although it is physically hard to hold the branch meetings every week, we need it from a mental point of view.'"

The question is, how can we regularize the branch meetings? One point I want to make concerning our findings is that the branch head must be determined to hold the branch meeting every week. Several years ago, we had a meeting to share advanced branch experiences. In that meeting, a workplace branch head said: "Initially, I held the branch meeting even though no one else was present. I would go to the branch center and sit down alone to ponder how to achieve branch advances during the time set for the branch meeting. That was where I started making efforts to have more branch members attend the meeting." It was so impressive a statement that I vividly remember it.

The other point is that we should hold the branch meeting in a manner that will encourage members. Amid divisive attacks on workers, it is important for JCP workplace branches to develop as a group of people tied by the common call for social progress. Holding the branch meetings regularly is indispensable in this regard. At the branch meetings, members will gain a perspective of their work and party activity amid solidarity with other members. Meetings should be what give participants hopes for tomorrow and encouragement to continue.

It is not that certain difficulties prevent branch meetings from being convened regularly. Instead, not convening branch meetings regularly causes difficulties to arise. Let us firmly determine that convening branch meetings is the first step to overcome difficulties.

Keep to jobs, union and party activities

A question raised during the hearing surveys was how to resolve the situation that core members of JCP workplace branches are so occupied with trade union activities that independent JCP activities have been weakened.

The answer can be found in the "policies and plans" of workplace branches in that they are the biggest guarantee for members assigned with whatever duties, whether trade union activities or independent JCP activities, to coordinate their actions. A workplace branch in Saitama Prefecture reported that members were thinking that they have a triple task of job, trade union activities, and JCP activities, but have found out that they can all be coordinated into the "policies and plans."

We want that JCP workplace branches formulate "policies and plans" so that jobs, JCP activities, and trade union activities can be pursued in a coordinated manner.

On retirees who keep JCP workplace branch membership

During the hearing surveys it became clear that many JCP members continue to belong to workplace branches even after they have left their jobs. Measures responsive to the actual conditions are necessary to deal with this question.

Some retirees are carrying out workplace branch activities as the center of the branch. We

want to ask them to be affiliated with the leadership of workplace branches or district bodies in order to make the most of their experiences, which need to be passed on to their successors through their activities. This will have a positive significance in the light of how workplace branches are organized at present.

JCP members who are not assigned with such duties should consult the branches and bodies, change their membership to residential branches, and make the most of their experiences and wisdom in the residential branches. In fact, many of the residential branch heads or leaders are comrades who were engaged in work-related activities for many years, demonstrating the unyielding worker spirit and playing an important role. We want them to find a new value as JCP members in their second life in carrying out activities to support the residential branches with their varied experiences.

5. On guidance and help by JCP bodies

At the end of my report, let me refer to the guidance and help to be provided by JCP bodies. Based on the hearing surveys, I want to stress the following three points as the basic attitudes of guidance and aid that JCP bodies provide to workplace branches.

First is the need to show respect for comrades who have struggled unyieldingly under difficult conditions at workplaces, understand their difficulties, and learn from them about how things are at workplaces. This is the starting point. The requests to JCP bodies that we heard most during the hearing surveys were: “We want JCP bodies to know the difficulties we are in” and “Please listen to our hardships.” We think that those who are working have much wisdom to share. This is what I keenly felt during the hearing surveys. The JCP should take advantage of that wisdom and seek a path of carrying out the struggle. Through this process, it is important to create relationship of mutual trust. The JCP Central Committee and prefectural and district committees are all asked to adopt this stance.

The second point is not for JCP bodies to see workplace branches from the short-term view of their being of help to deal with immediate tasks, but to take steps, together with workplace branches, to maintain and strengthen workplace branches incorporating a long-term perspective. We want JCP bodies to clearly understand the strategic significance of strengthening the JCP foothold in workplaces in the light of achieving a revolutionary undertaking in Japan by carrying out activities to strengthen workplace branches.

Thirdly, it is necessary for JCP bodies to carry out independent activities to encourage the activities of workplace branches. Questions at workplaces need to be taken up by national as well as local assemblies so that these questions are addressed. JCP bodies should work with local assembly members groups to independently provide labor/livelihood consultancy services. JCP local bodies and workplace branches should cooperate to take the initiative in organizing temporary workers. It is also important for JCP bodies to carry out activities on their own and thereby encourage and promote workplace branch activities.

For JCP bodies to increase their guidance and assistance to workplace branches, their organizational setup must be strengthened. Based on the Congress decisions, many JCP prefectural committees, including Tokyo’s have established workplace assistance committees. In Saitama Prefecture, three members were assigned to the job exclusively (including two former members) to make up the 8-member committee. It was reported that the assistance committee members and district committee members in charge of JCP workplace branches jointly held meetings for study and exchange, and organized study and other meetings industry-wide as aspects of their practical assistance.

We ask for the activities of workplace assistance committees to be organized systematically. In particular, systematic convening of forums of exchanges for workplace branches should be regarded as indispensable activities for all JCP bodies.

In Closing: Historic Mission of the Working Class and the JCP

The Constitution of the JCP gives a definition of the Japanese Communist Party as the “political party of the Japanese working class and the Japanese people as a whole.”

The working class accounts for an overwhelming majority of Japan’s population, being the class that can decisively affect the development of Japanese society and the economy. There will be no improvement in the living conditions of the Japanese people without the improvement in the status and rights of the working class.

The working class is also the class with the historic mission of proceeding to achieve socialism/communism which the JCP aims for. This is the class to shoulder the achievement of a socially-just future society.

A path to a democratic coalition government will be opened only when the JCP becomes a majority force in the working class struggles. I conclude my report by expressing the determination to make every effort to advance our activities in this field. (*Akahata, April 25, 2006*)

Summing Up Discussion

by SHII Kazuo

Japanese Communist Party Executive Committee Chair

Thank you for participating in the discussion on issues related to JCP activities in the workplace.

Thirty-six members spoke during the two-day discussion. We have shared moving experiences and learned a lot of lessons. We have learned lessons from all the statements made. I assure you that we will make this discussion known to as many party members as possible.

Those who were unable to speak because of time limitations are kindly requested to submit their written statements to us. We will read them through and make use of them in our future work.

This seminar was organized with the aim of learning from each other. I want to convey what I have learned from your statements.

This meeting has been intended to be a forum for learning from one another. On behalf of the party center, I want to conclude the meeting by making a few points that I have learned from your statements.

The JCP is undaunted defender of interests of workers and the general public

Firstly, one point that runs through all the statements is that the JCP is undaunted in fighting in defense of workers and the general public in defiance of all kinds of difficulties.

The JCP’s founding spirit is always to reduce the people’s hardships. JCP workplace

branches and their members have always stood firm for the founding spirit, and I believe that this seminar has confirmed it.

One participant talked about JCP members who managed to create JCP branches at two work sites where workers were transferred in a major company restructuring scheme. These JCP members soon assessed the needs of the workers, organized unorganized workers, and increased *Akahata* readership. Their activities convince us that JCP members are JCP activists wherever they are. We could feel the power of their unyielding struggle.

A young worker from Kyushu talked about young workers who rose up in a struggle demanding that their unjustifiable dismissals be retracted. He said, "We will fight until we win a victory in order for young people to become hopeful about their future prospects."

A teacher reported about teachers struggling to ensure that children can learn despite the difficulties in overcoming the present repressive school system where competitive and controlled education is making learning very difficult. I was struck when a teacher talked about how he treated a child with psychological problems. The teacher said that when the child said, "I am an inferior thing," he hugged him and said, "That's not true. You are a very good boy." The teacher showed empathy and his words in defense of the boy were encouraging.

In the report, I explained why the proposal for the adverse revision of the Fundamental Law of Education is so serious. Its Article 10 states: "Education shall not be subject to improper control, but shall be directly responsible to the public." The phrase "directly responsible" means that education is an undertaking between humans, and that teachers should be "directly responsible" to the children and to all the people, no matter how bad the government is. I think that the essence of Article 10 of the Fundamental Law of Education is that teachers must defend children by refusing to be "subject to improper control" under whatever difficult conditions. Listening to the teacher's speech, I was very much impressed by this teacher's undaunted effort that embodies the spirit of Article 10 of the Fundamental Law of Education.

Let us open the future using wisdom, will power and creativity

The second point we learned from the discussion is that JCP workplace branch members are facing up to difficulties by giving full play to their voluntarism and originality.

Corporate restructuring schemes that attack workers take on dual forms. While directly undermining regulations concerning employment through deregulating the labor laws, it is changing the way companies are doing business. Companies are attacking workers using very devious methods. We need to be armed with wisdom in order to expose these attacks and organize workers' struggles against them. Such wisdom is exerted in concrete struggles.

A workplace branch at a company that carried out restructuring through management integration used its workplace bulletin to expose the lie about the stated "crisis of business" and announced that workers don't need to worry about the company going bust. This campaign helped change workers' view of the problem. Although the company pushed through the restructuring, the JCP branch's effort has helped to increase workers' trust in the JCP and make progress in the drive to increase party membership and *Akahata* readership. I was moved by the branch standing firm against the attacks launched by capital on workers by using their members' wisdom and power.

There was also a story about a company that forced through a major restructuring scheme under the pretext of possible insolvency that placed the company under the control of the Resolution and Collection Corporation (RCC). The company deliberately spread among workers a mood of resignation and that it would be useless to oppose the RCC plan for rationalization. The JCP workplace branch in its workplace bulletin reported that the RCC was not assigned to draft a rationalization plan and that the plan was actually drawn up by the main banks. As workers came to know of this fact, the anti-communist barriers that had stood among workers began to fall down. It was reported that workers' trust in the JCP increased, and the branch was able to increase the number of *Akahata* subscribers.

I'm sure that all speakers endorse this JCP spirit. What impressed me was that JCP members at workplaces were using their wisdom and strength to face up to the attacks on workers and to open the way for the future. I keenly felt that this is exactly what JCP activities are about.

Clearly, JCP activities are carried out in unity guided by the JCP Program, JCP Congress decisions, and Central Committee decisions, which constitute the basic policy worked out by all party members. As to tasks for which branches are directly responsible, it is a matter of principle that branches address the problems of their local areas of responsibility by using their own wisdom and strength and displaying their voluntary will and originality. Of course, guidance and assistance by JCP bodies is important. Branches should overcome difficulties and open up the future by using their own wisdom and strength, with or without party guidance. This is what the JCP is about. The role of the JCP bodies is to understand and assist branch activities.

Building close ties with workers is the foundation of all party activities

The third point is that the discussion has reminded us that our ties with workers in our day-to-day relationship and our interest in workers' needs should be where we start to develop any party activity.

A workplace branch head in the medical services said, "Until I participated in this discussion, I was thinking that making 'policies and plans' is a difficult and troublesome task. But after hearing the report explaining that making 'policies and plans' is an effort to establish mutual trust between the party and the workers at the workplace, I realized that it is exactly what we have been doing in our branch." After speaking about various activities to achieve workers' demands, he added: "I now understand that making 'policies and plans' means what I have just said, including a plan to prepare successors, and increase the participation of all branch members in party activities. Is my understanding correct?" Yes, that's exactly what is meant by "policies and plans."

JCP branches that have concerns for the needs of the workers in the workplace by maintaining close ties with them are engaged in various activities that can be considered components of "policies and plans," though they are not specifically referred to as such. These elements will be purposefully included in "policies and plans", giving an appropriate shape to these components.

A participant from a post office branch in the Kansai district spoke about an experience of making its activities vibrant by involving young contingent workers. The branch organizes such events as a cherry blossom viewing party, a barbecue party, and a one-pot party, for the purpose of building relationships of friendship and trust. It was impressive that branch members always try to reach out to workers in the same workplace and say to them that they are ready to listen to workers who are looking for ways to solve their problems. Although they cannot help solve every problem, they are certain that they can count on the JCP and the National Confederation of Trade Unions (Zenroren). This is how this branch attempts to pay attention to young workers' problems, listen to them, help them to solve problems, and increase ties between the party and workers.

A participant from a workplace branch at a major private sector company in the Kansai district spoke about its members' participation in various democratic organizations, including the New Japan Women's Association, the local JCP supporters' organizations, and *Akahata* subscribers' association, with the aim of understanding each other's needs and increasing ties. She said that the branch has been able to increase JCP membership and broadly involve women workers at the workplace in these activities.

This has reminded us that day-to-day relationships with workers are essential for advancing JCP activities.

The Report's call for a struggle based on workers' needs was much discussed

The fourth point is about the way to overcome the difficult conditions forcing workers.

I think that in the discussion you have deepened an understanding of what I mentioned in the report concerning the experiences shown in our survey throughout the country in regard to ways to advance the struggle for workers' demands on problems facing temporary workers, the performance-based wage system, and attacks on government employees.

We will try to understand contingent workers' problems and demands

Let me begin with the task of organizing contingent workers. We heard reports about full-time workers paying as much attention as possible to the contingent workers' difficulties and the need to fight together with them to win their various demands in a manner that will foster solidarity among the workers.

Speeches by educational workers took up the issue of part-time teachers who are discriminated against as teachers. The status of part-time teachers is very unstable. It is very hard for them to be integrated into the teachers' organizations at schools. Party members in many schools are paying attention to part-time teachers' problems. Under the slogan, "There is no such thing as part-time education," they spoke about their experiences in winning improvements in their treatment as part-time workers.

A workplace branch at a major company in the Kansai district said that a survey of the workers' demands was very effective for improving their working conditions. He said that a survey found that part-time workers want a stable job status and that they want the company to pay for their lunches, and allow them to use the company's recreational facilities. He said that his branch took these demands up and succeeded in having the company pay for their lunches.

Speeches showed that full-time workers are willing to fight together with part-time workers to have their working conditions improved. I think that many JCP workplace branch members are full-time workers. These full-time workers have sympathy for the contingent workers. It is wonderful that full-time workers willingly show sympathy for contingent workers and share their suffering with them in the spirit of a "unity of the working class" in order to win an improvement of working conditions for all workers.

Struggle against performance-based labor management begins with understanding workers' requests

In my report I spoke about how we should fight against performance-based workplace control. Speeches have brought to light the importance of facing up to the contradictions arising from this method of personnel management and the needs of the workers.

Speeches have shown how great the power of surveys at workplaces is. A participant from a workplace in the medical services sector in the Kanto district reported that a survey conducted after a performance-based wage system was introduced showed a sharp increase in the number of workers who wanted to quit. One reason they gave for their decision to quit was that they could no longer endure the excessively heavy workloads that made them physically and emotionally exhausted, and that they were worried about their health. The JCP branch used their complaints and requests as a link, and it was reported that a young nurse joined the JCP.

One speaker said that the JCP branch started up a circle to think about the question of performance-based pay. In order to promote discussions in the workplace, they produced a document showing how much money workers would lose if a performance-based wage system is introduced. Although substantial pay cuts were carried out, this struggle helped increase workers' trust in the JCP. In the course of this struggle, the branch had new members for the first time in more than 10 years.

In opposing to the replacement of full-time regular workers with contingent workers and the introduction of a performance-based wage system, we are taking on business circles and large

corporations, so it is very difficult to win the struggle. However, if we stand firm for justice as well as for workers' demands, we will be able to increase workers' trust in the JCP, thus paving the way for a larger and stronger JCP. The discussion has clearly revealed this fact.

Changes are taking place in workplaces; business circles' control of workers is being shaken

The two days of discussion have reminded me of significant changes taking place in workplaces out of concerns about a rapid increase in the number of contingent workers and the imposition of the performance-based pay system. I listened with keen interest to many speakers refer to changes taking place in the workplace.

I was also impressed by a report that a workplace in a major company in the manufacturing industry began to change in the wake of a young worker's attempted suicide. His co-workers visited the man who was taking a leave of absence to recover at home and heard him talk about his problems over dinner. He smiled and this broke the ice and helped the young workers in the workplace feel free to speak about a life that is worthwhile and about their own future prospects. That was how solidarity can be formed irrespective of the type of employment. They raised the issue of the performance-based pay system. He said, "We have been told to do our utmost in order to be rewarded. But if you do so, it will damage your health. I no longer want to surrender my life to the company."

A speaker from a workplace at a major financial firm spoke about the union that does not demand a basic-wage raise and workers' rejection of the union policy. A majority in the union's workplace branch expressed disagreement with the union.

In the mainstay of corporate Japan, which is making more profits than ever, workers are voicing opposition to excessive workplace control. I think that it is important that this has been confirmed in the discussion.

Repel attacks on public service employees by developing a struggle with the principle that 'residents are the key players'

In the report to this seminar, I spoke about the need to join forces with residents to defeat the attacks on government and other public service workers. There were statements made that will help deepen our understanding of the problem.

A participant from a local government spoke about the struggle developing in his district against the privatization of childcare and other public services in cooperation with residents. He said, "An effective struggle can be developed if residents are the main players. The key to winning a victory is to inform the residents of the struggle, thus laying the groundwork for residents to rise up, and participate in the struggle making use of their expertise. The struggle has to do with the basic principle that is essential to get the public involved in repelling the attacks on public service workers.

We heard about good experiences and suggestions for party building in workplaces

The fifth point is that participants made statements full of originality and provided lessons concerning ways to develop our membership drive and *Akahata* readership drive.

I could comment on the remarks in many ways, but I think it is now clear that the most important task is for us to increase public consciousness. One speaker said, "We will be careful not to shelve the task of increasing the party membership and *Akahata* readership." We know that this is an important task, but we are apt to put this task on the back burner. To fight this tendency and accept the task is an important starting point.

One more thing. In the activity to increase the party membership and *Akahata* readership, we who pursue expansion of party strength and those joining the party or becoming *Akahata* subscribers make a decision, and this decision represents a leap of faith. I think that many

speakers wanted to speak about the importance of making such a leap to become politically active.

A speaker from a party branch in a local municipality spoke about the experience of calling on 18 people to join the JCP and bringing in four people into the party during a six month period of time. It began when a scholar who had trusted the JCP agreed to join the party in response to a request for his membership. This experience showed branch members how important it is not to narrow the range of people who might want to join. This was how the branch started enlisting new JCP members by removing one internal barrier after another. The speaker's words were very suggestive. He said, "We thought that we were willing to accept anyone who is sincere, but in practice we could not find anyone to reach out to because we were the choosers. After the inner walls were broken down, our membership drive began to make progress."

On the question of the relationship between the JCP and trade unions at workplaces, speakers talked about the importance of pursuing an advance in both the trade union movement and the JCP.

I think we should note that one speaker said, "It is very important to organize contingent workers into a union. At the same time, we should know that contingent workers may leave the union when they move to another job, but if they join the JCP, they can always be party members wherever they may work."

Contingent workers change their jobs frequently. More accurately, they are often forced to change jobs. But if they join the JCP, they can always work in the JCP networks wherever they move. In other words, party members can expect a warm reception by party organizations; they can join with other party members anywhere. This means that only by joining the JCP will they be able to find a group that unites JCP members who share the common goal of achieving social progress. This is why it is important for the JCP to make efforts to call on contingent workers to join the JCP while persuading them to join the union. I thought that this is best expressed in the speaker's words: "JCP members remain JCP members, wherever they go."

On the question of party building, many spoke about the importance of organizing study groups in the JCP workplace branches, saying that this effort can energize party members.

A JCP district committee member in Tokyo, who is assisting teachers' JCP branches, spoke about his experience in advancing party building with two main tasks: studying the JCP Program and achieving teachers' demands for better working conditions, including shortening their working hours.

A member from a workplace at a large corporation in the Kansai region said that the branch study of *Capital* serves as a driving power to advance the struggle for contingent workers' demands.

We have been saying our struggle focuses on the problem of "capitalism without rules." The suffering of workers has become all the more serious because the rise of neo-liberal economic policy overlaps "capitalism without rules." The JCP Program provides for the basic policy of economic reform to be carried out by overcoming the present problems and creating an economy that abides by fair and just regulations.

Read *Capital* and you will find a revelation of the many contradictions of the capitalist system, and how it emerges, develops, and declines. The book also exposes the various mechanisms of exploitation including long working hours, heavy workloads, and the accumulation of capital. *Capital's* analysis of a variety of methods for exploiting workers can be a guide that helps us to analyze what's going on in workplaces at present.

By studying the JCP Program and scientific socialism, JCP members can increase their power to unite the working class.

In this great cause that has an important bearing on the future of Japan, we will continue to

make steady efforts for further advances

I have summarized what we have learned from the discussion in this seminar. However, the discussion has produced more than this. I think that every statement has provided us with something to learn from.

This meeting has been a great success thanks to your efforts.

This result, however, is only a first step forward. Let us make further efforts to produce concrete results. The JCP 24th Congress decided to hold meetings of this kind regularly. The JCP Central Committee regards this meeting as the first in this effort and will continue our effort toward convening such meetings methodically.

To establish a large and strong JCP in many workplaces and rally a majority of workers is a major undertaking on which the future of the JCP, and of the future of Japan hinges on. Let us use our wisdom and strength and learn from each other in order to achieve advances in this important cause. Thank you. (*Akahata, April 27, 2006*)