THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY

The Society for the Study of Social Policy aims to promote interdisciplinary studies relating to labour issues and social conditions. Although most members are economists, others are sociologists, jurists and historians.

The 78th national convention of the society was held at Waseda University, Tokyo, on May 27 and 28, 1989. The main theme of the convention was “Japanese enterprises and foreign workers.” In the plenary session, six reports were presented.

Hideo TOTSUKA (The University of Tokyo) reviewed critically recent field studies on the transferability of Japanese-style management and decentralizing efforts of Japanese multi-national firms. He desired the improvement of the quality of researches in this field.

The presentation by Hiromasa SUZUKI (Waseda University) was on “the problem of the influx of foreign workers.” He tried to give correct information on social experience related to immigrant workers in European countries. In the light of a diversity of experiences of European countries, he suggested a few policy directions in Japan.

Miyoko SHIOZAWA (Keisen Jogakuen College) reported that the employees of Asian subsidiary companies of Japanese multi-national enterprises, who were predominantly young and female, were under poor working conditions and were closely controlled by the management.

The presentation entitled “Internationalization and strategies on local human resources” by Mitsuhide SHIRAKI (Seisen Junior College) pointed out difficulties of staffing local managers on the basis of a series of field surveys.

Michio NITTA (Musashi University) examined Japanese-style production system with a view to considering whether it can be transferred and can form a new model of management in U.S. whose firms have their own industrial relations practices. The reporter’s survey results were varied. He also reported that American industrial relations practices varied.

Industrial relations in the Japanese subsidiary companies in Britain were analysed by Mitsuo ISHIDA (Doshisha University). He pointed out that Japanese-style industrial relations were well reflected in wage tables of those companies in various degree.

In the closing session chaired by Shigeyoshi TOKUNAGA (Tohoku University) and Makoto KUMAZAWA (Konan University) there was vigorous discussion during which opposing opinions were eagerly presented. The report of the Society containing major presentations of this convention was published as Japanese Enterprises and Foreign Workers (in Japanese), Tokyo, 1990.

The 79th convention was held at Kwansei Gakuin University, Nishinomiya, on October 21 and 22 with the theme of “The stages of social policy in post-war Japan.” This subject was selected because the social policy centering around labor had been
undergoing drastic changes. For the purpose of the program, the organizing committee had divided the post-war period into three stages and had selected four major fields of policy.

Tsuneo ONO (Josai University) reported on the social policy during the period of reconstruction, from 1945 to 1954, which was characterized by the indirect rule by the occupation authority. The rules worked out by the interaction among the government, labor and employers and different characteristics in major policy fields.

Kozo KIKUCHI (Kyoto University) reported how particular politicians had tried to establish orderly industrial relations in the period of high economic growth, 1955 to 1973. He also noted that environmental problems emerged as critical factors due to rapid economic growth.

Tsutomu HYODO (The University of Tokyo) handled “the period of transition,” from 1973 to date, mostly in relation to the policy thought “Japanese-style welfare society,” which is replacing the earlier policy ideal “welfare state.” According to the new ideas the role of the family, community or firm in relation to the welfare of people are more important than those of the state. He reviewed major theoretical positions.

Tomio MAKINO (Nihon University) reported on the development of “fair labor standard policies,” especially those related to minimum wages and working hours. His conclusion was that the deplorable working conditions which often obtain in small businesses, and the permissive attitude of trade unions have allowed internationally low public standards.

Rokuro HOTANI's (Matsuzaka University) report on “the formation and transformation of industrial relations policies,” was followed by the presentation by Mitsuya ICHIEN (Kansai University) on “Development of social security in the post-war Japan—the notable features of Japan.” In Japan, no attempt is made to guarantee an equal “national minimum” of living for all people. The social insurance schemes for workers and for others, covering all members of the society but guaranteeing different levels of benefits, have worked out since 1961.

Kazumichi GOKA (Kanazawa University) traced post-war developments of employment policy and measures planned to counter unemployment. He pointed out that the government had been promoting unstable employment in cooperation with employers.

Reviewing the foregoing reports, Mikio SUMIYA (Chairperson of the National Advisory Council on the Social Security System) remarked that the basic framework of social policy had been formed initially under the occupation, and it had changed as the labor market changed. Due to the inclusion of non-workers in the social security system, the members of the Society, who had been mostly interested in the policies regarding workers, had to take new approaches of study.

The final session which was a symposium was chaired by Sakuro OMAE (Kwansei Gakuin University) and Hiromichi NISHIMURA (Doshisha University).

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