

《論 説》

## The Labor Movement and Japanese Immigrants in the Pacific Northwest in the 1930s

Katsutoshi Kurokawa

In 1936, Hoko Ikeda, the editor of *The Hokubei Jiho*, a Japanese newspaper published in San Francisco, visited Seattle for the convention of the Japanese American Citizens League. He contributed an article to *The Taihoku Nippo* (*Great Northern Daily News*), a newspaper based in Seattle. At the end of the article, he stated as follows :

By the way, this region has an old history of the union movement and I wish to use this opportunity, my visit to Seattle, to hear the Issei leaders' explanations of their experiences.

We have suffered a serious loss in California by the Japanese exclusion movement, because we have neglected measures to cope with labor unions.

This region has been rewarded with good results on policies for labor unions by keeping in touch with them through Duncan and so forth.

I wish to hear in detail because I think this would be a good present for compatriots in California.

This is why I wish to ask the teachings of seniors in Seattle<sup>1</sup>.

It seems that Ikeda was not fully aware of the changing situation in Seattle. Progressive leaders, such as James Duncan and Harry Ault, who had been sympathetic toward the Japanese, fell from power in the labor movement of the Pacific Northwest in the middle of the 1920s. After that, the friendly relationship between the Japanese community and the labor organizations in Washington State, which was established by the end of the 1910s, collapsed. The leaders of the Seattle Japanese community continued to make efforts to maintain friendly relationship with white labor unions and, on the other hand, to spread the cause of the labor movement among Japanese workers of the Pacific Northwest, but their efforts rarely bore fruit in the 1920s. Though the situation in Washington State seems to have been slightly better than the one in California even in the late 1920s, the position of Japanese workers was not such an enviable one, either<sup>2</sup>.

Then, what was the relationship between Japanese communities and the American labor movement in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, September 5, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> See Katsutoshi Kurokawa, "The *Taihoku Nippo* and the Labor Movement in Washington, 1922-1924", *Okayama Economic Review*, 35-4, idem., "The Condition of Japanese Immigrants in Seattle and its Vicinity, 1925-1929", *Okayama Economic Review*, 36-4.

Pacific Northwest in the 1930s? The United States plunged into the Great Depression in 1929. The Great Depression and the New Deal by Franklin D. Roosevelt affected almost all sections of the American economy and society. Of course, Japanese immigrants, who were convalescing from the shock of the Alien Land Act, were severely hit and assistance to their jobless compatriots became one of the most urgent assignments of the Japanese communities in the Pacific Northwest in the 1930s<sup>3</sup>. Organized labor that had been stagnant in the 1920s gathered momentum as a result of the National Industrial Recovery Act and the Wagner Act. The formation of the CIO (at first, the Committee for Industrial Organization, but later, the Congress of Industrial Organization) told of the advent of a new era of the labor movement. What influence did these events exert on the relationship between the labor movement and Japanese immigrants in the Pacific Northwest? The aim of this article is to examine this question.

## I

Let us state our conclusion first. In general, the situation of the early 1930s was not so different from that of the latter half of the 1920s.

In 1933, the president of the Seattle Central Labor Council declared himself against the movement to reconsider the Japanese Exclusion Act and admit quotas for Orientals as well as for Europeans :

Workers wholeheartedly approve of the exclusion of Orientals. American workers never wish to compete with Japanese workers. If we admit the entry of Oriental immigrants this time, it would disturb our efforts to raise wages and still more torment many people who have been distressed by the economic depression. If we would admit the entry of Oriental immigrants who will reduce wages of American workers, it would be impossible for the United States to cope with the urgent problem, which is to relieve jobless persons. This sort of movement would impede the success of the President's industrial recovery administration programs<sup>4</sup>.

In the dispute over the enactment of the Japanese Exclusion Act in 1924, the Seattle Union Record, which was the then organ of the Seattle Central Labor Council, criticized this act as a "needless insult" to the Japanese and insisted that the United States should admit Japanese immigrants based on the same standards that would be applied to Europeans<sup>5</sup>. However, it was impossible for Japanese communities of the 1930s to find such reliable sympathizers among the Seattle AFL organizations.

Not only in Seattle but also in various other districts of the Pacific Northwest, most labor organizations were rejecting Japanese workers. Moreover, white workers who were cornered by the depression often stiffened their attitudes toward the Japanese. The news of anti-Japanese movements at farms or sawmills scared the Japanese

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<sup>3</sup> See *Taihoku Nippo*, February 21, 1931.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, August 24, 1933. See also, August 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Seattle Union Record*, March 13, 1924. See also *ibid.*, April 15, 1924.

communities in the Pacific Northwest, because these were very important workplaces for Japanese workers who had not enough capital to run farms or to set up their own small businesses. On the other hand, white unions repeatedly requested Japanese workers to cooperate with their activities, especially at times of labor disputes and, if Japanese workers did not comply with their demands, they criticized the Japanese as faithless strikebreakers. In 1936, Heiroku Oishi, a reporter of *The Taihoku Nippo*, deplored the situation as follows :

Though unions are rampant in the United States, the Japanese cannot become members of them, because we are not a hundred percent American. It would be fair if they do not interfere in Japanese lives, even if they do not admit Japanese. However, on the one hand, unions hold up “fairness” as their attraction and, on the other hand, they forced the Japanese to obey the constitutions of their unions<sup>6</sup>.

Another event that might have alienated Japanese communities from the cause of the labor movement was a dispute that occurred between Filipino farm workers and Japanese farmers. Filipinos could immigrate to the United States even after the enactment of the Immigration Act in 1924, because the Philippine Islands were an American colony at that time. Therefore, the population of Filipinos in the United States increased rapidly in the 1920s and by 1930 surpassed the Chinese population<sup>7</sup>. Of course, they settled in the Pacific Northwest too.

At first, Japanese communities feared them as young and powerful competitors to Japanese workers. As early as 1924, *The Taihoku Nippo* warned the Japanese in Seattle about the effects of the influx of Filipino workers with the headline, “Jobs of the Japanese Were Taken by the Filipinos : Employment of Compatriots Decreased to Half.” :

We have already reported on the fact that our compatriot workers in the city have been deprived of their jobs by Filipinos and they were falling into a difficult situation. Recently, such a situation became more and more serious and we need to study this problem as a social problem of our compatriots<sup>8</sup>.

It was not long before the arrival of Filipinos also proved a boon to Japanese communities. They offered a fresh market for many Japanese shops to replace the decreasing number of Issei<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, as Mitsuhiro Sakaguchi made clear in his book on the Japanese immigrant communities in the Pacific Northwest, they became a very important source of labor for the Japanese farms that had outlived the storm of the Alien Land Act<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, August 17, 1936

<sup>7</sup> Herbert R. Barringer, Robert W. Gardner and Michael J. Levin, *Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States*, New York, 1993, pp.39.

<sup>8</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, September 4, 1924. See also *ibid.*, December 4, 1926.

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.*, April 21 and August 30, 1928

<sup>10</sup> Mitsuhiro Sakaguchi, *Nipponjin Amerika Iminshi (History of Japanese Immigration in America)*, Fuji Shuppan, 2001, p.235, pp.308–309.

However, with the enactment of the National Industrial Recovery Act, Filipino farm workers organized labor unions and demanded wage rises. Their wages had been cut since the outbreak of the Great Depression. Higher wages, of course, would be of benefit to Japanese farm workers too. However, in Japanese communities of the Pacific Northwest in the 1930s, it seems that farmers were more influential persons than the decreasing number of older Issei farm workers or novice Nisei workers. Most articles of *The Taihoku Nippo* reported on these sorts of disputes from the Japanese farmers' points of view, and criticized the movement of Filipino workers as the result of instigations by communists and agitators<sup>11</sup>.

Consequently, the atmosphere within Japanese communities in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1930s was by no means favorable to the cause of the labor movement. In the late 1910s and the early 1920s, when James Duncan and Harry Ault were leading the labor movement in Seattle, the Japanese Association of North America kept in close contact with the Seattle Central Labor Council and, on the other hand, encouraged Japanese workers and businesspersons to cooperate with white labor organizations. *The Taihoku Nippo* also supported many strikes that occurred in those years and advised Japanese workers not to become strikebreakers<sup>12</sup>. However, I could not find any articles that showed such strong friendship for the labor movement among the ones of *The Taihoku Nippo* in the early 1930s. In some articles concerning the San Francisco General Strike, which broke out in 1934, *The Taihoku Nippo* reminded readers of the Seattle General Strike that had occurred about fifteen years previously. However, it did not mention the fact that some Japanese unions had taken part in the Seattle General Strike and that the Japanese Association of North America and *The Taihoku Nippo* had strongly supported them in 1919<sup>13</sup>.

Even under such conditions, some people continued to believe in the importance of the organization of Japanese workers. In Seattle, Kazue Miyata was the most dedicated, or at least most well known, defender of the noble cause of the labor movement. Because of the "vagueness and the relative smallness of a true working class" in Seattle, which Shotaro Frank Miyamoto pointed out in his classical work on the Seattle Japanese community, and because of the unsympathetic attitudes of white labor organizations, it was difficult for genuine labor unions of the Japanese working class to form and develop in Seattle<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, the role of a devoted pathfinder such as Miyata was important in Seattle<sup>15</sup>.

Miyata's principal weapon was *The Rodo (Labour)*, a newspaper that he controlled as both the publisher and the editor. Katsunari Sasaki, a predecessor and comrade of Miyata in Seattle, began to publish *The Doho (Compatriots)* in 1906 to advocate the significance of the labor movement. However, it could not survive the

<sup>11</sup> For example, see *Taihoku Nippo*, March 6, 14 and 15, 1934.

<sup>12</sup> See Kurokawa, "The *Taihoku Nippo* and the Labor Movement", pp.52–56.

<sup>13</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, July 16, 1934.

<sup>14</sup> Shotaro Frank Miyamoto, "Social Solidarity among the Japanese in Seattle", *University of Washington Publications in the Social Sciences*, Vol.11, No.2, December 1939, p.71.

<sup>15</sup> On Miyata as "a Unique Journalist", see Kazuo Ito, *Hokubei Hyakunen Zakura*, Nichibo Shuppansha, 1973, pp.266–267. *Hokubei Hyakunen Zakura* is translated into English by Shinichiro Nakamura and Jean S. Gerard as *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America*, Seattle, 1973. In the case of this version, see p.208.

depression of 1909 and went out of existence after 34 issues<sup>16</sup>. On the other hand, *The Rodo* outlived the Great Depression. It was published monthly in 1927 but became bi-monthly by 1937. The following is an extract from an article published in the issue of July 15, 1927 :

Once the United Northwest Japanese Association proposed the resolution that we should promote and encourage the organization of compatriots and it passed (the Pacific Coast Japanese Associations Deliberative Council) unanimously. However, we have never heard about how the UNJA strived for the organization after that.

The resolution was, in fact, the proposal of the JA (Japanese Association of North America) too. Nevertheless, what did the JA do to organize or develop labor unions or trade unions? Even the proposers and supporters of those days must have forgotten this sort of resolution.

However, this is the very problem that is most essential for the future of our compatriots and not a vague one such as the enlightenment or improvement to the compatriot society. Why does the Pacific Coast Japanese Associations Deliberative Council not exert itself to the utmost by making it a permanent and continuous project?<sup>17</sup>

Though some people called him ‘Red’ or ‘Communist’, it seems that Miyata’s activity was not radical enough in order to satisfy more extreme activists ; for example, Karl Yoneda. Yoneda later criticized that *The Labour* had turned to a way to make a living for Miyata<sup>18</sup>. On the other hand, Miyata could expect at least moral backing from some of the most influential leaders of the Seattle Japanese community. Heiji Okuda (Hozan) described a meeting of 1933 as follows :

The day before yesterday, the memorial meeting for Mr. [Ototaka] Yamaoka was held because ten years had passed since he died... The face of Rodo Miyata when he recalled his key supporter Mr. Yamaoka looked sad, but Mr. Kenji [son of Ototaka] Yamaoka’s interesting speech reminded us of the visage of the deceased<sup>19</sup>.

Ototaka Yamaoka was one of the most respected “Genros” (grand old men) of the Seattle Japanese community. We cannot make clear whether Miyata could find another supporter as influential as Yamaoka after he died. However, Okuda’s friendly description of Miyata’s attitude seems to be a sign of the fact that Miyata was not so isolated from the main current of the Japanese community even in the 1930s. This is because Okuda was one of the most respected and “beloved” old men in the Seattle Japanese community in the 1930s as

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<sup>16</sup> Katsunari Sasaki established the Japanese Labor Association in Seattle in about 1906 and worked eagerly to establish friendly relationship between the Japanese workers and white labor unions. However, he went back to Japan in the early 1920’s.

<sup>17</sup> *Rodo*, July 15, 1927, in Karl Yoneda Papers, UCLA Libraries and Collections, Box 5, Folder 5,

<sup>18</sup> Karl Yoneda, *Zaibei Nipponjin Rodosha no Rekishi (History of Japanese labor in the United States)*, Shin Nippon Shuppansha, 1967, p.90. According to the recollection of Terumitsu Kano, “He [Miyata] was called as ‘Red’ or ‘Communist’ but he was politically theoretical and he had many supporters” (Ito, *Hokubei Hyakunen Zakura*, p.267, *Issei*, p.208).

<sup>19</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, March 2, 1933.

Yamaoka had been in the 1910s<sup>20</sup>.

Besides Miyata, there were many other Japanese in the 1930s who strived for an improvement of working conditions of Japanese workers, and for the promotion of friendship between Japanese workers and white labor unions in various districts of the Pacific Northwest. For example, Yoshiaki Yamane, who had organized the Japanese branch of the Brotherhood of Maintenance Way Employees at Roosevelt, Washington in 1919, continued to commit himself to the cause of the labor movement in the 1930s. Kanju Kato, one of the most influential leaders of the labor movement in Japan in those days, visited the United States in 1935. Yamane introduced him to an audience of about 1000 at a meeting held in Portland. This was the job that Miyata accepted at a meeting for Kato held in Seattle<sup>21</sup>.

Another person whom I wish to note here is Gentaro Oe of Mukilteo sawmills. As a leader of young workers in sawmills, he continued to insist on the necessity of a friendly relationship between Japanese workers and white workers, though his endeavors were not always rewarded<sup>22</sup>. In a contribution to *The Taihoku Nippo*, the title of which is “From the Position of a Worker—A proposal for the Labor Union Organization”, he stated as follows :

In farms, in railroads, in canneries, and in work in cities, compatriot workers cannot help but obey conditions that employers would order or give, because their actual condition is a collection of complete disorganization and disorder. They do not have any measures, steps and institutions to struggle for them even if they happen to feel the state of affairs are unreasonable and disadvantageous.

Even in sawmills where compatriot workers have a long history and the most powerful base as a group, the confusion and apathy is disgusting.

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The present situation of compatriot workers who cannot have principles and opinions as workers and human beings both individually and socially may be misunderstood or scorned by white workers. If this situation lasts, not only the reputation of compatriot workers will be harmed but also they will be forced into corners economically. I believe that our most urgent business is to organize and train compatriot workers in some kind of structure and to strive for the promotion of mutual welfare as practical and powerful organizations<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> The following is an extract from an article on the English page for the Nisei of the New Year Edition of 1936 of *The Taihoku Nippo* entitled, “The ‘Big Ten’ of the Northwest” : “Who are the Northwest’s ten first generation men who have most aided the cause of the Nisei? To this query, we answer with the following list of prominent and well known Japanese who have not only tried but succeeded in advancing the cause of the dai nisei...H. H. Okuda—Seattle Pioneer and most beloved of leaders, always willing to help out nisei endeavors.”

<sup>21</sup> Yoneda, *Zaibei Nipponjin Rodosha no Rekishi*, pp.44–45, Ito, *Hokubei Hyakunen Zakura*, pp.388–389 (Issei, pp.314–315), *Taihoku Nippo*, June 5 and August 15, 1935.

<sup>22</sup> According to the recollection of Tokuchi Maeda, “Mr. Oe and others made great effort to calm down the anti-Japanese mood, but still Issei could not join the union.” (Ito, *Hokubei Hyakunen Zakura*, p.484, *Issei*, pp.397–398).

<sup>23</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, February 8 and 10, 1936. See also his interview by Heiroke Oishi in an article of *The Taihoku Nippo* of December 24, 1936. He also contributed many articles to *The Taihoku Nippo* under the penname of Bokujin Yamaga [Sanga?].

In addition to these three people I have specifically mentioned, there were many inconspicuous or unknown activists and workers that contributed to the development of the Japanese labor movement in the Pacific Northwest. For example, Karl Yoneda states that a small number of Japanese communists began to publish a labor paper, whose title was *The Rodosha no Koe (Voice of Workers)*, in Seattle from November 1930. However, there is not as yet enough evidence either to prove their names or to clarify the relationship between them and the Seattle Japanese community<sup>24</sup>.

## II

The situation that brought about the organization of Filipino farm workers also channeled the development of Japanese labor organizations.

First, the making of the codes of fair competition, which became necessary for the National Industrial Recovery Act, gave Japanese communities an opportunity to reconsider the importance of the organization of workers in the United States. In an article that reported on the cooperation of sixteen Japanese trade associations with the National Industrial Recovery Plan, *The Taihoku Nippo* emphasized as follows :

Japanese have a strong sense of duty and do not assert their rights. However, the interests of workers were most protected in the present law and, by the second clause of the three principles of the law, it provided that the conditions that might be against the joining of workers to labor organizations cannot be filled out, and that every thing should be proclaimed or should be reported through the organization. Therefore, employees should have utilized this opportunity first. However, there are no unions of employees amongst the Japanese. It is necessary to organize unions by each industry, though a little too late<sup>25</sup>.

Secondly, the expansion of the influence of the CIO lowered barriers for Japanese workers to join labor unions everywhere in the United States.

They say that the American labor union, which had been one of three anti-Japanese forces together with the Hearst papers and the American Legion, at last accepted the sound argument of the progressive fraction. This fraction had insisted that it is foolish for fellow workers to quarrel among themselves by connecting the sum of wages to the color of skin, and that they should open doors and give equal opportunities to all people who are making a living from their labors, even if they are Orientals. It is said that the Longshoremen's Union, the Seamen's Union and others in San Francisco changed their old principles greatly and, because of the new situation, it would be possible for the Nisei to find

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<sup>24</sup> Yoneda, *Zaibei Nipponjin Rodosha no Rekishi*, p.90. A worker with conservative views who received this paper contributed an article to *The Taihoku Nippo* and criticized senders of this radical labor paper bitterly. See *Taihoku Nippo*, June 24, 1931,

<sup>25</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, August 3, 1933.

new professions<sup>26</sup>.

Thirdly, the general development of the labor movement in the United States, which was stimulated by the enactment of the NIRA and the Wagner Act, of course, affected Japanese communities, too.

In fact, because of the expansion of the influence of labor organizations, there was every possibility that the position of Japanese workers might become a more unstable one without their own organizations. One of the Japanese unions that was organized in response to such conditions in Seattle in around 1936 was the Japanese Restaurant Workers' Union consisted of one hundred and several tens of members. Kazue Miyata became the first president of this union<sup>27</sup>. Miyata wished to extend this movement and, in an article in *The Rodo*, invited the grocery workers to form their own union :

They say that compatriot grocery managers in Seattle decided to organize their union. It must be a good thing for them to keep up with the times. However, why do the grocery workers not organize their own union at the same time?

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The restaurant workers in Seattle already organized their union. The number of its members is close to two hundred and it will amount to five hundred if it embraces kitchen workers in every field. If grocery workers do not organize themselves now, it means that only grocery workers will be left behind the times<sup>28</sup>.

The establishment of the Japanese Restaurant Workers' Union did not divide the Seattle Japanese community, even if not all Japanese welcomed it whole-heartedly. However, a chain of events occurred in the process of the organizing of workers of the Alaska canned-salmon industry brought about conflicts that were more serious and divided the Japanese, especially the Nisei, into different camps.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Alaska canned-salmon industry had been one of the most important sources of earnings for the Japanese workers of the Pacific Northwest<sup>29</sup>. Filipinos gained ground not only in farms but also in the Alaska canneries on the heels of Chinese and Japanese. They were the majority of workers in the industry by the end of 1920s<sup>30</sup>. However, as late as 1935, an article of *The Taihoku Nippo* insisted

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, June 2, 1936.

<sup>27</sup> This union developed into the inter-ethnic Oriental Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union by joining hands with Chinese and Filipino workers in 1937 (the testimony of Chuichi Sunohara, Ito, *Hokubei Hyakunen Zakura*, p.646.–647, *Issei*, p.549).

<sup>28</sup> *Rodo*, June 10, 1937, in Karl Yoneda Papers, Box 2, Folder 10. An article of *The Taihoku Nippo* of June 23, 1937 noticed that the general assembly of the Restaurant Workers Union for its establishment would be open on the 25th. It contradicts the article of *The Rodo* and the recollection of Sunohara in *Hokubei Hyakunen Zakura*. I cannot at the moment explain the reason for this contradiction.

<sup>29</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, May 9, 1935. Kazuo Ito allots one chapter of his *Hokubei Hyakunen Zakura* to the experiences of Japanese immigrants in Alaska.

<sup>30</sup> Chris Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor : The Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1870-1942*, Temple University Press, 1994, p.127. The following accounts about the struggle over the organization of the canned-salmon industry largely depend on the detailed description in this book.

as follows :

It seems that the pivots of the Japanese industries in the Northwest were first, the Alaska fishery, secondly, lumber, and thirdly, agriculture. The estimation by experts shows that the Alaska industry and lumber are providing at least five hundred thousand dollars to our society<sup>31</sup>.

Though I think that this argument is a little overestimated, it does show the relative significance of the industry for the Japanese community at that point of time.

In 1933, Filipino workers organized the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union (CWFLU) and acquired the endorsement of the AFL as the Local 18257. At first, the CWFLU concentrated its activities on the improvement of labor conditions for Filipino workers. These had been rather unfavorable compared to Chinese and Japanese workers. However, it was not long before the CWFLU decided to admit Chinese and Japanese workers as well and transformed itself into an inter-racial organization<sup>32</sup>.

Some Japanese, including Clarence Takeya Arai, who was one the most prominent Nisei leaders in the Seattle Japanese community in those days, was offended by the actions of the CWFLU. Arai tried to promote the interests of the Japanese by organizing an ethnically exclusive union of Japanese workers. On the other hand, younger and more progressive Nisei, some of whom were students of the University of Washington, joined the CWFLU. They thought that the CWFLU was a genuine workers' organization that was pursuing progressive programs. Moreover, some of them were convinced that their course was more effective to protect the interests of Japanese workers in the canning industry. About thirty years later, in a letter to Bill Hosokawa, the author of *Nisei: The Quiet Americans*, Daisho Miyagawa, one of the Nisei activists of the CWFUL, states, "The Issei-Nisei were quite passive and aloof during the early Filipino-inspired and led organizing overtures. This doubtlessly accelerated the numerical decline of the Japanese in the industry."<sup>33</sup>

The confrontation developed into a conflict between the AFL and the CIO. In accordance with the recommendation of the special committee, which was made up of three Filipinos and two Japanese, Daisho Miyagawa and George Minato, the CWFLU joined the CIO and became the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union, CIO Local 7. On the other hand, the AFL supported Arai's union, AFL Local 20545, which was more conservative and ethnically segregated<sup>34</sup>.

In general, *The Taihoku Nippo* and the Seattle Japanese community under the influence of the Issei supported the Local 20454, though George Taki (gawa), one of the Nisei activists of the CWFUL, published his opinions

<sup>31</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, May 5, 1935.

<sup>32</sup> Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor*, pp.136-138, 158-161, *Taihoku Nippo*, March 31, 1936.

<sup>33</sup> Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor*, pp.161-163, Daisho D. Miyagawa to Bill Hosokawa, February 25, 1968, Japanese Association of North America Papers, Manuscript Collection of University of Washington Library, vertical file : 611, p.1. The letter I read is not the original one but the copy of it that was sent to Richard C. Berner in June 12, 1969. See also, *Taihoku Nippo*, March 30, 1936. On Arai's early commitment to the canned-salmon industry, see *Taihoku Nippo*, December 29, 1933.

<sup>34</sup> Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor*, p.164-165.

in the English pages of *The Taihoku Nippo*<sup>35</sup>.

I will not go into the details of this struggle in this article because Chris Friday has already given an accurate description of it in his book, *Organizing Asian American Labor*. However, this struggle certainly influenced the relationship between the Japanese community and the labor movement in Seattle.

At one stage of the struggle, Japanese members of the Local 20454 picketed Pier 2 of the Seattle Port to prevent Filipino workers boarding vessels. *The Taihoku Nippo* praised their action as a legitimate measure of union activities supported by the AFL and the Seattle Central Labor Council. Moreover, at the end of an article that referred to this problem, it was stated as follows :

Do unions admit the entry of the Japanese or not? This problem has bewildered Issei from the first. Now the Japanese organized a respectable union, placed the line of pickets bravely on the dispute, made the departure of ships postponed indefinitely, and produced the compromise and the solution. This was a heroic and epoch-making undertaking in the history of the development of compatriots in the United States. This undeniable fact made the public recognize the existence of the union. We Japanese residents should cooperate with this daring attempt and should make all possible efforts to support it in various sides<sup>36</sup>.

That is to say, the advent and the development of the more radical and indiscriminate CIO forced the AFL to take an interest in Oriental workers that it had previously disregarded for so long. If not, all Oriental workers would have gone over to the CIO. Then, the AFL selected the conservative and segregated Japanese union, the Local 20454, rather than the radical and inter-racial CWFLU. This changing situation also affected the attitude of Japanese communities toward the labor movement and accelerated the organization of Japanese workers.

### III

The microfilm of *The Taihoku Nippo* in the National Diet Library in Japan ends in November 1937. Therefore, I cannot examine in detail the events that occurred and may have influenced the relationship between the American labor movement and Japanese communities from 1938 through 1941. However, there is one source of testimony, which is probably more significant than analysis of newspaper reports. In 1968, in a letter to Bill Hosokawa, Daisho Miyagawa narrated his role in the campaign to organize Japanese workers in the canned-salmon industry. He says :

... by 1940, and certainly by the time that bad day came around in December 1941, the union idea was no longer novel or especially provocative of tension and controversy in the Seattle Japanese community. An illustration was how every

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<sup>35</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, April 12, 26, October 18, 30, 1937,

<sup>36</sup> *Taihoku Nippo*, May 1, May 3, 1937.

single Japanese–operated restaurant (those south of Yesler, anyway) was organized so quickly and with so little fuss that I’m not sure the development was ever reported in the vernacular press<sup>37</sup>.

On the other hand, at a meeting of the Seattle Central Labor Council in March 1942, the delegate of the Garage Employees No.44 stated that about half of the members of his union were Japanese. It seems that the reason why he made this statement was to appeal to the of delegates with reference to the distress of his union due to the outbreak of World War II and the evacuation of the Japanese. At all events, by his statement, we can confirm the fact that even a union including a great many Japanese could join the Seattle Central Labor Council and could be one of the most active unions in Seattle at the beginning of the 1940s. Surely, the relationship between the Japanese community and labor organizations in the Pacific Northwest was changing once more<sup>38</sup>.

The attack on Pearl Harbor, however, reversed the times and wiped out the results of the struggles of the Japanese workers and activists, which were long and bitter as I have examined.

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<sup>37</sup> Daisho D. Miyagawa to Bill Hosokawa, p.5.

<sup>38</sup> Proceedings of the Central Labor Council of Seattle and Vicinity, March 4, 1942, King County Central Labor Council Records, Manuscript Collection of The University of Washington Library. By examining the proceedings of 1940 and 1941, we can confirm the activities of this union.

## **The Labor Movement and Japanese Immigrants in the Pacific Northwest in the 1930s**

Katsutoshi Kurokawa

The aim of this article is to examine the change of the relationship between the American labor movement and Japanese communities in the Pacific Northwest in the 1930s.

The relationship between the American labor movement and Japanese communities in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1930s was not a friendly one. Most labor organizations continued to reject Japanese workers. White workers, suffering as a result of the Great Depression, were often hostile to the Japanese. The attitudes of Japanese communities toward the labor movement were also not favorable ones.

However, some people : Kazue Miyata, Yoshiaki Yamane, Gentaro Oe, and many other unknown activists, continued to believe in the importance of the organization of Japanese workers and committed themselves to the cause of the labor movement in this difficult situation.

The situation began to change in the mid-1930s. The start of the NIRA regime made Japanese communities reconsider the significance of the organization of workers in the United States. The development of the CIO lowered barriers for Japanese workers to join unions throughout the United States. Moreover, the general development of the labor movement in the United States, which was stimulated by the enactment of the NIRA and the Wagner Act, of course, affected Japanese communities too.

In response to such conditions, the Japanese Restaurant Workers' Union was organized in around 1936 in Seattle. In the canned-salmon industry in which many Asians were working, the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union was organized in 1933. This union was organized by Filipino workers, but, before long, Japanese and Chinese workers also took part in it. By the beginning of the 1940s, as Daisho Miyagawa stated later, "the union idea was no longer novel or especially provocative of tension and controversy in the Seattle Japanese community".