



# ZENKYO NEWSLETTER

No.23

MARCH 2007

## Historical Struggle against Adverse Revision of the Fundamental Law of Education — Great Asset to the Success of Our Future Struggle —

In December 2006, the bill to adversely revise the Fundamental Law of Education was forcibly enacted by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and Komei Party, surmounting the objections by more than 70 % citizens to the adverse revision of the Law at the current parliamentary session. The Law was enacted in 1947 with the spirit of the Constitution of Japan. The handling of the bill by the ruling parties has left a major blemish on the history of the Parliament and of the education in Japan.

The appalling reality came to light in October 2006 that to “guide” public opinion, the government had used “plants” in town meetings it convened to discuss the law’s revision, which flamed out people’s anger in every corner of Japan. With tax revenue, the government sponsored the town meetings where public opinion was forged. Underestimating the seriousness of this matter, the ruling parties finally enacted the revised education law by majority.

Together with the Constitution of Japan, the Fundamental Law of Education was considered to be a precept for the establishment of peaceful Japan as well as education for peace and democracy. Therefore, those who aim to adversely revise the Constitution tried consistently to break through the way by the adverse revision of the Fundamental Law of Education. The ultimate aim of the adverse revision of the Constitution is to change Article 9 that stipulates the renouncement of war and the non-possession of any war potential. By the revision of the Law, the government intends to radically change the “education for the people” into the “education for the state” and to foster children for the “military state”, by strengthening control over education and by changing education based on equality into education based on competition, which inevitably lead to widen the gap between the privileged and underprivileged.

ZENKYO and all other democratic forces in Japan made their utmost efforts to prevent the adverse revision of the Fundamental Law of Education. In order to promote struggle against the adverse revision of the Law at local and school levels, ZENKYO established an ad-hoc Committee as early as August 2003. In March 2005, ZENKYO succeeded in organizing an Assembly to oppose the adverse revision of the Law with approximately 10,000 participants. In order to promote a

nation-wide movement, a “Liaison Council Never to Admit the Adverse Revision of the Fundamental Law of Education” was organized on the initiative of a national trade union center ZENROREN in 2006 with the participation of democratic organizations in various fields, in which ZENKYO played a central role.

In the final stage of the struggle against the adverse revision of the Law, those educational researchers who had expressed their views as witnesses before the Parliamentary committees organized various meetings to appeal the crucial condition of the Law and the importance to defend the Law. The trade union of university workers also joined forces in the movement by organizing its own meetings. In December 2006, the roads on the back of the House of Parliament were crowded with citizens who came from every part of Japan to participate into the sits in and the crowd was seething with anger every day.

The newly elected Abe administration is going to promote its “educational reform” on the basis of the adversely revised law. As the principles of education to promote humane growth and development of children and to rear builders of a peaceful state and society is based on the Constitution of Japan, the adversely revised law cannot disregard the principles. With confidence in the great asset achieved by the past struggle, educational workers in Japan are now making every effort to defend the Constitution and to realize the principles of the Fundamental Education Law enacted in 1947.



# Objection to the New Liberal Educational Reform

The Abe Cabinet that was formed in September 2006 is going to further promote its “educational reform” on the model of new liberal “Thatcher Reform” in the United Kingdom. For that purpose, the Education Rebuilding Council, an advisory organ to Prime Minister was newly established. The Council submitted its First Report in January 2007.

Based on the Report, the Abe Cabinet is about to implement a nation-wide achievement tests for elementary six grade pupils and for middle school third grade pupils and to publish the results of the tests. The Abe administration is going to accelerate competitive education by intentionally producing popular schools and unpopular schools, combining the achievement tests and ‘paternal choice of schools’ across Japan. The final aim of the administration is to rate children and schools and to introduce a ‘voucher system’ that allocates school budgets according to the number of enrollment.

With regard to educational workers, the government aims to introduce the ‘teacher evaluation system’ to classify teachers according to their loyalty to the government policy. Furthermore, the government

aims to introduce the ‘compulsory renewal system of teacher certificates’ every 10 years to expel teachers who dispute the government policy from teaching profession.

Together with the above-mentioned ‘teacher evaluation system’, the government intends to promote national control over schools by enforcing ‘school evaluation’ and by establishing an ‘Institution for Educational Standards’, equivalent to the British office for Standards in Edition (Ofsted).

To facilitate above-mentioned policies, the government enforced in December 2006 the adverse revision of the Fundamental Law of Education enacted on the basis of the Constitution of Japan, prevailing tone of which is peace, human rights and democracy.

Although Prime Minister Abe often states to follow the model of new liberal educational policies in the United Kingdom, it has already become evident that those policies have failed in obtaining excellence in education. On the contrary, there are so many examples enough to prove that such policies would produce ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in education contrary to the educational principles to promote growth and development of every child.

Firmly determined never to admit the implementation of the adversely revised law of education, Japanese teachers strive to improve schools in close cooperation with parents and community residents so that every child may be cherished as human beings.



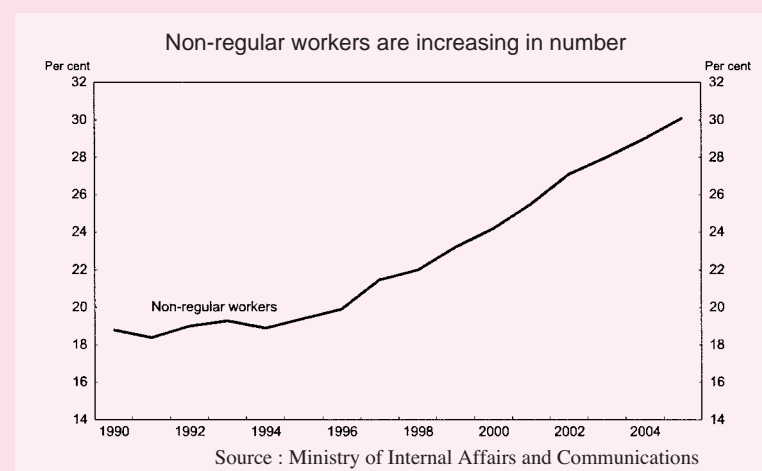
# Equal Opportunity for Children!

## — Remarkable Increase of “Working Poor” Households —

The polarized gap between the poor and the rich as well as the increase of poverty-stricken people poverty have become major objects of public concern in Japan that has the world's second largest economy (by nominal GDP). The number of those families whose incomes were under the standard of poverty line amounted to 6.56 millions (18.7% of working households).

The problems were mainly caused by the dismissal of one million workers in major enterprises to compensate the loss for the cleaning up the bad debt mess in 2001 and 2002. Since then, most companies have increased non-formal full-time workers. According to the survey conducted in 2002, one out of three young workers between 20 years old and 24 (31.8%) was non-formal worker. The number of needy elementary and middle school pupils who were provided the support for school supplies and school lunches amounted to 1,337,000 (one out of eight pupils) in 2004.

The increase in child poverty is not only reducing the children's growth and potential but also posing a risk of perpetuating poverty across generations. In order to overcome such a crucial issue, ZENKYO has attached much importance to attain the goal of free compulsory education by demanding the reduction of parental financial burdens and the guarantee of equal opportunity of every child.



### *Education Topics*

## High School Students' Movement Succeeded in Freezing the Plan to Unify/Close High Schools

Most public high schools in Japan are established and administered by prefectures. Under the deteriorating prefecture finance caused by the reduction of national grants, the authorities are compelled to restrain expenditure for education by promoting the plan to unify and/or close high schools across Japan.

In Nagano prefecture where the Winter Olympic Games were convened in 1998, the Education Board published a plan to unify and/or close 14 high schools in rural mountain areas. Nagano High School Teachers and Staff Union initiated a campaign to appeal to the public that the plan might violate the right to learning of students by compelling them to go to schools from long distance and by giving their parents heavier burdens for commutation. The Union also asserted that the plan would accelerate the depopulation of the community and give negative influence upon the efforts to activate the community economy. The assertion was supported by a good many resi-

dents and members of local assemblies regardless of their respective political belief and stand and succeeded in promoting the collaboration among teachers, parents and community residents.

It is worthy of special attention that a number of high school students themselves acted on their own initiative to stop the unification and/or closure of high schools. An Assembly of High School Students was successfully convened with the participants from 20 high schools across Nagano Prefecture including those students whose schools were targeted for the unification and/or closure. They also organized a panel with the Governor on the plan and requested members of the Education Board of Nagano Prefecture to reconsider the plan. It is quite natural that those high school students demanded the authorities to listen to their voices as persons concerned. Finally, those activities attained success by making authorities freeze the major parts of the plan.

# International Activities

1. On April 11, 2006, a delegation of Venezuelan International Solidarity Committee visited ZENKYO headquarters and exchanged views on actualities and tasks of education in both countries.

2. ZENKYO organized a campaign to raise fund for the support of education and recovery in Iraq and sent the amount of ¥3,000,000 to Iraq through a Japanese NPO, Japan Team of Young Human Power. In June, ZENKYO was informed that a school had been established in Baghdad with the support.

3. A ZENKYO representative participated in the World Social Forum convened in Vancouver June 23 – 28, 2006 as a member of Japanese delegation. The delegation actively appealed to as many participants as possible on the importance of the elimination of nuclear weapons and Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan.



4. Two representatives from the Korean Teachers and Educational Workers Union (KTU) participated in the “Educational Forum 2006” (former National Assembly for Educational Research) convened from August 17 to 20, 2006 and exchanged views with ZENKYO members for the international solidarity.



5. In the end of August 2006, ZENKYO sent a delegation to the ILO headquarters to exchange views on its allegation to the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Profession (CEART). The delegation informed the officials the present situation of teacher evaluation system and various problems caused by the system. In



order to learn from its excellent educational system, the delegation also visited Finland. It visited some schools and had meeting with the National Education Board.

6. At the invitation of Korean Teachers and Educational Workers Union (KTU), ZENKYO sent a delegation to the International Symposium on the Teacher Evaluation convened by KTU from September 22 to 23, 2006 and deepened friendship and solidarity with various participants. ZENKYO presented a report on the present situation and tasks concerning teacher evaluation in Japan.

7. The Fourth International Forum of Public Service Workers was held in Tokyo from October 31 to November 3 to discuss on privatization and other issues surrounding public service workers. ZENKYO was a member of its organizing committee. Delegations from Mexico, Canada and the United States visited a school and a university in Tokyo and exchanged views with educational workers in Japan.



8. In November, ZENKYO made a donation of ¥100,000 to the earthquake victims in Pakistan through a trade union center ZENROREN.

9. ZENKYO Youth Department organized a peace tour to Poland in the end of December. They visited Auschwitz Concentration Camp and had a lecture from the Director, which gave them an extraordinary impact.



10. ZENKYO sent a representative to the World Forum for Food Sovereignty convened in Mali Republic, February 22 – 27, 2007.

