Progress of the Labour Movement in Japan

It is only of recent years that the trade union movement in Japan has begun to assume something of the nature of the labour movement of the West. In order, however, to gain a clear understanding of the true character and present status of the Japanese labour movement it is necessary to have some knowledge of its origin and early development (1). Its history can be roughly divided into five periods : (*a*) 1883 to 1893 ; (*b*) 1894 to 1900 ; (*c*) 1901 to 1910 ; (*d*) 1911 to 1917 ; (*e*) 1918 and onwards. The first three of these fall within the *Meiji* era—the period of the reign of the Emperor Meiji, after the fall of the feudal system—during which Japan took her place in the modern world and adopted the industrial systems of the West. The fourth period marks a transition from the earlier stages of fruitless efforts to organise labour to the new stage of the formation of unions on a more or less definite basis. The fifth and final period marks the new orientation of Japanese labour resulting from the influences of the great war.

Development before the War

The Period 1883 to 1893

The movement for the organisation of labour in Japan dates from 1883, when an agitation was started against the introduction of horse trams in the city of Tokio. It was organised by young politicians who, with the support of the rickshawmen of the city, formed a union called the Rickshawmen's Party (*Shakaito*). This movement failed, but a series of incidents, such as the exposure of the ill-treatment of the Takashima miners in 1888 and a lock-out of the workers at a tea factory under foreign management at Yokohama in 1889, intensified the general desire for organisation, while the Liberal Party (*Jiyuto*) kept up a continual agitation on behalf of labour. In November 1892 a new party, known as the Oriental Liberal Party (*Toyo Jiyuto*), was formed, which consisted of the Japan Labour Association (*Nippon Rodo*

(1) Sources :

Ohara Institute for the Study of Social Problems : *Nihon Rodo Nenkan (Japanese Labour Year Book)*. Osaka, published by the Institute. July 1921.

Shakai Seisaku Jiho (Social Reform), Sept. and Nov. 1920. Tokio, published by the Kyocho Kai (Association for Co-operation between Capital and Labour).

Tokio Nichi Nichi Shimbun : *Yuai Kai, its Organisation and General Features* (In Japanese). Tokio. Jan. 1921.

Sen Katayama : *The Labour Movement in Japan*. Chicago, Kerr & Co. 1918.

The Labour Monthly, Vol. I, Nos. 1 and 2, July and Aug. 1921. London, Labour Publishing Company.

Kyokai) and the General Suffrage League (*Futsu Senkyo Kisei-domei Kai*), but when the Toyo Jiyuto, which had never been strong, fell to pieces, the Japan Labour Association also collapsed.

These movements were largely political, either organised by politicians or working by means of political parties. The first attempt to form a trade union for purely industrial purposes dates back to 1864, but this endeavour as well as those in 1887 failed.

The Period 1894 to 1900

The war with China from 1894 to 1895 provided a great stimulus to Japanese industry, but was followed by the inevitable period of general depression, when prices were high and wages, though higher than before the war, had not kept up with the cost of living. The need for some organisation of labour came to be very keenly felt.

In April 1897 the Workers' Faithful Friends Society (*Shokko Giyu Kai*) came into existence. The organisation, in its manifesto, advocated moderate methods, and its regulations provided for the formation of (1) local trade unions in each county or city where there were more than seven workers of the same trade; (2) local federations of the county and city unions in the same trade; (3) national federations of local federations in the same trade; and (4) a general federation of workers composed of the national federations of the different trades. The main object of the association was the care of the sick, aged, and injured. In July it was decided to change the name to the League for the Formation of Labour Unions (*Rodo Kumiai Kisei Kai*). A vigorous propaganda campaign was carried on throughout Japan. Important meetings were held in Tokio, Yokohama, and in Omiya, and in December 1897 the first labour magazine, the *Rodo Sekai* (*The Labour World*) was published. Many branches of the League were founded, those at Aomori and Morioka being particularly strong.

In 1898 the Government began the drafting of a Factory Act. The League at once set on foot a nation-wide movement to ensure that some form of factory law should be passed. However, this movement proved fruitless, and owing to the opposition of industrial interests the Bill was dropped for the time being. Some time afterwards in March 1911 the present Factory Act was passed by Parliament.

Meanwhile the League continued its activities. While it strove to develop its own organisation, it achieved much in the formation of new unions and in giving assistance to unions in want of help. Among the unions to which it lent its aid were the Printers' Friendly Society (*Kappanko Doshi Konwa Kai*), the Printers' Union (*Kappanko Kumiai*), the Japanese Railway Workers' Union (*Nittetsu Kyosei Kai*), the League of Horse Tram Drivers and Conductors of Tokio (*Shinai Basha-tetsudo Gyosha Shasho Kumiai*

Kisei Kai), the File Makers' Union (*Tokio Yasuri Seizo Gyo Kumiai*), the Lithographers' Union (*Sekiban Insatsu Ko Kumiai*), the Doll Makers' Union (*Tokio Hinaningyo Kumiai*), the Cooks' Union (*Ryorinin Kumiai*), and others. At the end of 1897 the membership of the League was stated to be 1,200, in 1898 over 3,000, and in 1899 about 5,700.

In the following year there was a sudden drop, partly due to lack of interest on the part of the workers and partly to the conviction that the aims of their leaders were political rather than economic. The organisation became discredited and soon fell to pieces.

During this period a considerable number of unions were formed, mainly under the influence of the League. Among them the most notable was the Union of Iron Workers (*Tekko Kumiai*), which started as a branch affiliated to the League. In 1900 its total membership had reached 5,400, distributed among 42 branches throughout the country. The members, however, were lax in paying their membership fees, and the whole organisation finally collapsed through lack of financial support.

A union which left an interesting record was the Japanese Railway Workers' Union (*Nittetsu Kyosei Kai*), which originated in the Society for the Improvement of Working Conditions (*Taigu Kisei Domei Kai*), formed in February 1898 by the railway engineers. More than 400 engineers struck with a demand for better treatment, and all the trains in north-eastern Japan were brought to a standstill. The strike was won by the engineers, who came to realise the need for organisation, and thereupon the Nittetsu Kyosei Kai was formed in April 1898. In 1901 the membership of the society was 1,000 and the amount of its funds 20,000 yen (2). Shortly afterwards revolutionary tendencies appeared among the members, and the government joined with the employers in the suppression of the organisation.

In March 1898 a printer by name Hikozo Osaki, employed by the Fukagawa Printing Co., organised in his factory with the help of six other employees a union called the Printers' Friendly Society (*Konwa Kai*). More than a hundred workers joined it, but no sooner was the nature of the union known to the employers than the seven organisers were discharged and the other workers forced to disband the union. Three months later it was revived and succeeded not only in holding meetings but in publishing a periodical journal. In the course of a few months a difference of opinion arose among the members which resulted in the dissolution of the union; but the moderate element shortly afterwards formed the Printers' Union (*Kappanko Kumiai*), aiming at the reconciliation of capital and labour. Branches were founded at Yokohama, Kyoto, Osaka, and other places, and the membership rose to 2,500. But this union only lasted a short time and was dissolved in May 1900.

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(2) One yen = 2s. $0\frac{3}{5}$d. or $0.498 at par.

The Period 1901 to 1910

While trade unionism in Japan was on the decline, the study of social problems was spreading. In 1897 the Society for the Study of Social Problems (*Shakai Mondai Kenkyu Kai*) was formed, and its members turned to the study of Socialist doctrines. In 1901 the Social Democratic Party (*Shakai Minshu To*) was organised. On the day of its formation the government ordered its dissolution and the organisers formed instead the Socialist Society (*Shakai Shugi Kyokai*). The Society published a periodical, the *Rodo Sekai* (*Labour World*), as well as numerous pamphlets, and held meetings for the spread of radical doctrines. On 5 November 1903 the celebrated People's Society (*Heimin Sha*) was organised. The society published the *Heimin Shimbun* (*The People's News*) and increased in strength and influence.

Then came the war with Russia. The leaders of the Socialists pronounced against the war and began pacifist propaganda, but the people as a whole rallied to the government. Socialist publications were suppressed, meetings of Socialists prohibited, many men sent to prison, and in September 1905 the Heimin Sha was dissolved. Shortly afterwards the members of the society, who had been dispersed throughout the country, began to publish various magazines for Socialist propaganda. There were differences of opinion among those taking part in the movement, which became more pronounced as time went on. The right wing formed the State Socialist Party (*Kokka Shakai To*) while the left wing formed the Japanese Socialist Party (*Nippon Shakai To*). A great many pamphlets were issued secretly and numerous Socialist works translated.

In 1908, at a street meeting in Tokio to welcome some Socialists released from prison, the leaders drew from their kimonos red silk flags each inscribed in white letters with the words "Anarchist Communism". The meeting was broken up by the police and many persons arrested. The "red flag case" and the discovery of an anarchist plot devised by Kotoku, a leading figure in the left wing of the Socialist movement, and others, who were subsequently executed or sentenced to long imprisonment, put an end to the spread of Socialism. All Socialist organisations were swept away for the time being, and the politico-labour movement sank into quiescence. The Socialist movement was essentially political rather than economic, and, although the workers were taught how to bring pressure to bear upon the employers by collective action and were often used in the campaign for general suffrage, the great masses of the workers had little to do with it.

The Period 1911 to 1917

On 1 August 1912 the Friendly Society (*Yuai Kai*) was founded in Tokio. The society had its origin in social welfare work started on a small scale in 1911 by Bunji Suzuki in a Unitarian

Church in the city of Tokio, where he held monthly meetings to educate the workers of the neighbourhood and opened a consulting office to give instruction and assistance to those who required it. The Yuai Kai arose out of work organised on the principle of mutual assistance simply and solely for the promotion of the moral, economic, and social well-being of the workers. Mr. Suzuki, with fifteen workers who were his associates, announced the foundation of the Yuai Kai, he himself being elected president. A large number of scholars and experts on social problems held positions as advisers to the society, and on 3 November its journal the *Yuai Shimpo* (*Friendly News*) appeared. In September 1914 the society revised its constitution and changed the title of its organ to *Rodo Oyobi Sangio* (*Labour and Industry*). This was again changed later to *Rodo* (*Labour*).

This organisation, succeeding where so many others had failed, met with much criticism. Many considered it the catspaw of capitalism because it received the patronage and support of eminent business men, especially Viscount Shibusawa, and because, at least during the first period of its development, it did not come out clearly as a labour union. However, the moderate attitude of the Yuai Kai in its early days favoured its development ; branches were established in various parts of the country, and the membership increased from 1,326 in August 1913 to 3,073 in July 1914. At the end of 1919, when the trade boom was at its height, it was reported to have some 35,000 members. With the support of its increasing membership the Yuai Kai successfully intervened in various strikes in which its members were concerned, until at last it became a general federation of Japanese labour, universally recognised as the most powerful and most inclusive union in Japan.

The Faithful Friend Society (*Sinyu Kai*) is another organisation which has recently come to the fore. Its origin may be traced back to the Konwa Kai of the printers, but its more recent predecessor is perhaps the Union of Printers of European Type (*Oyu Kai*) which was founded in the spring of 1907 by printers specialising in European type. This organisation increased greatly in membership. Within a year of its formation practically all the printers using foreign type in the city of Tokio had joined the union. The printers of Yokohama, Kobe, and even of Nagasaki, in spite of the distance, applied for admission. The inauguration meeting was held in March 1907, making the Oyu Kai at that time the only labour organisation with purely trade union aims.

In July 1910 a provisional agreement was made between the Oyu Kai and a number of printing firms, which was officially endorsed by the union members when the organisation held its fourth general conference on 3 November 1910 in Tokio. This agreement is of importance, since in its first article it laid down the closed shop principle, stating that firms where printers using foreign type were employed should admit only members of the Oyu Kai. Although the agreement was soon disregarded, the fact that a labour union succeeded in obtaining a closed shop

agreement is significant in the history of the labour movement in Japan.

However, it was not long before a crisis came which threatened the position of the Oyu Kai. The workers at the Tsukiji Printing Company struck, and the Oyu Kai, fighting desperately for victory for the workers, was defeated. While the dispute was still in progress the fifth general conference of the union was held in Tokio. A large number of delegates attacked the director, expressing disapproval of his management of the strike funds, and the bitter controversy arising among the members threatened to dissolve the entire organisation ; the union barely survived the crisis.

The great war, which broke out a short time after this, dealt a fatal blow to the printing industry as far as the printers specialising in European type were concerned. The industrial depression caused much unemployment among the printers, and the union was unable in this crisis to provide for the unemployed. The workers began to lose faith in it and its prestige melted away. The ninth general conference of the union, held in October 1915, decided to discontinue the publication of its journal, and the union ceased to function for a year. However, certain members continued to agitate for its revival, and a year after the abandonment of the publication of its official organ plans were made for the formation of a new organisation to be known as the Faithful Friends' Society (*Shinyu Kai*). The following spring, on 15 April, a great inaugural meeting was held at Asakusa, when the Shinyu Kai was officially launched. With a view to including in its membership all the printers in the country, the union was reorganised in January 1918 at a large conference in the Kanda ward of Tokio. In March 1918 it began to publish its organ, *Shinyu* (*The Faithful Friend*).

Recent Progress and the Present Situation

There are several reasons why the development of the Japanese labour movement has been very slow. First of all, it is only quite recently that the industrial revolution began, and only within the last twenty-five years that its influence has been felt to any considerable extent. Hence there has not been sufficient time for the development among the workers of a definite class-consciousness. Further, industrial workers were too few in number to constitute a power in the social movement. Workers were chiefly recruited from farms and villages to meet the sudden demand in industrial towns when trade was flourishing, and when trade depression forced factory workers to be idle they easily found work on farms or in the country from which they originally came. Consequently they had no training in organisation, nor had they felt the necessity of providing measures against unemployment by means of collective effort.

Secondly, until recently the textile industry dominated the industrial world. At the end of 1916, 55 per cent. of the total

number of factories were textile, and 59 per cent. of the total number of workers were employed in textile factories (3). Owing to the nature of the work, the great majority of those engaged in textile factories were female workers, who were not only less educated than the men and less fitted to take part in the social movement, but, on account of the fact that they took up employment for a year or so only, with the object of earning money for their dowry, were not interested in the systematic improvement of their working conditions by means of collective action.

Thirdly, the ingrained influence of *Bushido* (chivalry) and the doctrines of Confucius, have trained the Japanese people to remain indifferent to material conditions, and their Buddhist religion has taught them to submit to the inevitable instead of rousing them to fight against circumstances.

Changes brought by the Great War

These fundamental conditions still exercise a great influence, but the great war brought about such a change in the economic life of Japan that it has afforded an unprecedented opportunity for the formation of labour unions. Not only were numerous organisations established in all parts of the Empire, but these organisations showed tendencies different from those existing before the war. The circumstances which led to such changes were manifold.

First there was the strong impetus given to Japanese industry through the war. Throughout the whole of the Far East supplies from Europe were cut off, and Japanese industry was called upon to meet the deficiency. New industries sprang up, and old ones doubled and trebled their output without being able to satisfy the demand. The result was naturally an enormous demand for labour. Wages rose and the labour market began to lose its equilibrium. As the textile industry flourished after the Chino-Japanese war, as gas and electricity companies sprang up after the Russo-Japanese war, so, during and immediately after this war, rapid progress was made in the engineering and chemical industries. The development in engineering and chemical works, calling for male labour, meant not only an increase in the percentage of male workers in the industrial population, but also an increase in the number of skilled workers, the class most fitted for effective organisation. The number of factory workers increased from 990,000 in 1914 to 1,440,000 in 1917, and the number of male workers from 420,000 to 690,000. It is estimated that the industrial population now numbers about three million (factory and allied workers, 1,700,000 ; miners, 450,000 ; land transport workers, 200,000 ; and seamen, 500,000) (4).

Secondly, the trade boom, which lasted more than five years, has enabled "entrepreneurs" to make enormous profits, in which it was but natural that the workers should desire to share. The

(3) KAWAI : *Opinion on Labour Problems*, p. 67. Privately circulated.
(4) *Social Reform*, Vol. I, No. 1, Nov. 1921, p. 40.

luxurious life of the war profiteers (*narikin*) especially, together with the enormous rise in the price of commodities out of all proportion to the increase in wages, gave rise to a strong feeling of discontent among the workers, who decided to unite and fight for higher wages and better working conditions.

A third important factor has been the altered trend of national thought. Social problems have never been so openly studied and discussed in Japan as during the last few years. Translations, books and papers on Socialism of various schools (Marxism, Syndicalism, Guild Socialism, State Socialism, etc.) were published to a considerable extent. Changed views on matters of national and international importance have affected all classes alike, awakening in the workers a consciousness of their social position.

A fourth important circumstance was the emergence of international labour problems. Information with regard to the work of the Commission on International Labour Legislation appointed in connection with the negotiation of the Peace Treaty acted as a strong incentive to the labour movement, and the question of selecting a workers' delegate to the First International Labour Conference aroused keen interest among the workers. Labour leaders considered this an unprecedented opportunity for voicing their claims, and the organisation of unions and the formation of confederations became a matter of vital importance in order that the labour delegate should be nominated from among the workers themselves. An enormous amount of propaganda was carried on in this connection by those who, although not workers themselves, assumed the leadership of the workers. The result was a general awakening of labour on the subject of workers' organisations and collective bargaining.

In addition it cannot be overlooked that during these years public opinion was generally in favour of the workers, and after the rice riots in 1918 the workers were convinced of the success of mass action. Strike statistics during the three years from 1917 to 1919 show that in 16 per cent. of the strikes the workers' demands were granted, in 48 per cent. there was compromise, in 20 per cent. the workers' claims were withdrawn, and in 16 per cent. the demands were rejected. The majority of the cases of compromise were in favour of the workers, and in numbers of instances where the claims were withdrawn the demands were actually granted, so that more than 60 per cent. of the total number of strikes turned in favour of the workers (5). This situation encouraged them to go forward as a united body.

Labour Organisations

Before the war there were already many labour organisations in existence in Japan, but, with the exception of the Yuai Kai, Shinyu Kai, and a few others, they were generally very small,

(5) *Social Reform*, Vol. I, No. 1, Nov. 1921, p. 41.

and their membership was restricted to workers in one factory, one mine, or at most one locality. Their aims, too, generally consisted solely in establishing mutual aid systems. During and after the war, especially in the years 1919 and 1920, great progress was made in organising labour. According to an investigation made by the Department of Home Affairs through the police authorities, it is estimated that in January 1921 there were 671 unions with a membership of 246,658, as shown below.

Occupation	Number of unions	Number of members
Porters and carriers	87	16,513
Engineering and metal workers	75	56,064
Chemical workers	68	18,264
Miners	56	28,592
Transport workers	49	11,394
Printers	34	6,057
Textile workers	22	6,503
Shipbuilding	12	16,895
Seamen	18	13,348
Lumber and wood workers	34	6,709
Miscellaneous and mixed unions	216	66,319
	671	246,658

Although these figures no doubt include not only the real labour unions, but also simple mutual aid societies, owing to the difficulty in distinguishing one from the other in their early stages, the fact remains that the number of organisations has increased four times and the membership three times since the war. The movement is, however, still in its infancy; the majority of the unions have from 50 to 300 members, and very few have more than 10,000, as the following figures will show:

Number of members	Number of unions January 1921
Under 15	34
From 15 to 50	147
From 50 to 100	131
From 100 to 300	205
From 300 to 500	57
From 500 to 1,000	54
From 1,000 to 5,000	39
Over 5,000 and less than 10,000	1
More than 10,000	3
	671

The Police Bureau in the Department of Home Affairs published in the middle of August 1921 the result of a more recent investigation into the numbers and membership of labour unions throughout the country. The report (6) shows that there are 273 labour unions including 11,680 members. The prefectures in which the organised workers are most numerous are Tokio, where there are 74 unions with 34,852 members; Kanagawa with 17

(6) *Tokio Asahi*, 20 Aug. 1921.

unions and 21,018 members ; Osaka with 23 unions and 15,355 members ; Hokkaido with 18 unions and 7,725 members ; Hyogo with 18 unions and 5,928 members ; and Fukuoka with 8 unions and 5,264 members. Particulars of the unions in the Nagasaki and six other prefectures were received too late to be included in this report.

These figures differ greatly from those previously quoted. This seems to be due to the fact that one investigation included not only labour unions but also some workers' mutual aid societies, whereas the other takes into consideration only labour unions as such. Labour organisations were established primarily with a view to rendering mutual aid to their members ; consequently they were composed of members of individual factories, mines, and workshops. The tendency of recent years, however, has been to develop those organisations with the object of working for the betterment of working conditions ; this has led to the formation of organisations composed of workers in several factories, mines, or workshops, while individual organisations which formerly had no connection with each other are now gradually amalgamating or forming federations.

Tendency towards Amalgamation and Federation

Until recently each labour organisation has devoted its energy to maintaining its existence and developing its work. There were practically no federations among the unions, with the one exception of the Yuai Kai. But after trade depression became acute in the spring of 1921, when several factories and mines shut down or were forced to reduce output, the number of discharged workers gradually increased. Charges were made that the employers were discharging especially those belonging to trade unions. The workers at least acted on that belief, and their organisations, realising the inadvisability of remaining isolated, made attempts to unite with each other and form federations or amalgamations.

This new movement for the amalgamation or federation of separate unions can be traced back to September 1919, when a dozen unions of different industries in the city of Tokio temporarily combined against the Government's procedure in connection with the nomination of the labour delegate to the International Labour Conference at Washington. From that time onward the important unions acted in co-operation. In January 1920 labour unions in the cities of Tokio and Osaka took joint action in order to obtain their common demands : universal suffrage for men, the amendment of the Public Safety and Order Police Law, and the enactment of the labour union law. In May the first May Day demonstration in Japan, attended by some 10,000 workers, was held in Tokio, and from this resulted the formation in June of the Confederation of Trade Unions (*Rodo Kumiai Domei Kai*) with a membership of 35,000, including twelve of the most important

unions, such as the Tokio Federation of the Yuai Kai, the Shinyu Kai, and others. In July of the same year the Pan-Japanese Miners' Federation (*Zen Nihon Kofu So Rengo Kai*), numbering 5,000 members and combining three bodies—the Miners' Department of the Yuai Kai, the Miners' Federation of Japan, and the National Miners' Union—was formed, the new Federation being affiliated to the Yuai Kai. In December, at the instance of the Yuai Kai, the Western Federation of Trade Unions (*Kansei Rodo Kumiai Rengo Kai*) was formed, including 14 important unions in the city of Osaka such as the Yuai Kai, the Kojo Kai (Union of workers in Osaka military arsenal), the Tekko Kumiai, and others, and numbering 17,000 members. Finally, in May 1921, 22 of the more important seamen's unions, including the Seamen's Department of the Yuai Kai and others, amalgamated and established the Japanese Seamen's Union (*Nihon Kaiin Kumiai*) with a membership of 5,000. It should be noted that this movement has been brought about mainly through the influence of the Yuai Kai, and therefore the formation of these federations paved the way for the further development of the Yuai Kai.

Socialism and the Labour Movement

After the dissolution of the Japanese Socialist Party in 1907 and the execution of a number of revolutionaries in 1910, the Socialist movement in Japan seems to have ceased all activities for the time being, but Socialist ideas, which had been fostered secretly, were brought to light under the influence of the revolutionary elements in Europe after the war. As has already been pointed out, from the middle of 1919 onwards Socialism in all its phases was widely discussed. Books on Socialism of various schools were published, and groups for the study and propaganda of Socialism sprang up everywhere.

This propaganda no doubt influenced the workers, or at any rate their leaders, and they gradually came to consider that the capitalist system was the fundamental cause of their trouble. In their search for means of emancipation from the ties of the system, as they phrased it, labour found sympathy in the Socialist movement, thus strengthening the contact between the two. In August 1920, for instance, leaders of the Yuai Kai, Shinyu Kai, the Union of Tokio Newspaper Employees (*Seishin Kai*), the Transport Workers' Union (*Kotsurodo Kumiai*), and the Japanese Watch Makers' Union (*Nihon Tokeiko Kumiai*) took part in organising the Socialist Union, and when that union was inaugurated in December of the same year many rank and file members of labour organisations joined it. At the annual congress of the Yuai Kai in October 1920 a heated discussion took place on the question whether the Yuai Kai should resort to direct action or parliamentary action, thereby showing the increasing power of the younger and more extreme leaders. The Yuai Kai and many other trade unions which ardently participated in the movement for securing manhood suffrage at the beginning of 1920 entirely changed their

attitude, and in the parliamentary session of 1921 showed their indifference to parliamentary movements. This indicates the gradual turning of the labour movement towards the Left.

The future policy of the Yuai Kai and other important unions —whether they are likely to veer to the Left or intend to follow the main lines of trade unionism—will have a great bearing on the general development of the trade union movement in Japan. It is significant that the Tokio Federation of the Yuai Kai has recently decided to withdraw from the Confederation of Trade Unions (*Rodo Kumiai Domei Kai*) on the ground of the radical policy of some of the constituent unions of the Confederation.

Among the members of the Confederation of Trade Unions there had been wide difference of principles. Up to the time of the formation of the Confederation the Yuai Kai had confined its activities to pure trade unionism, while others, such as the Seishin Kai and Shinyu Kai, expressed extreme Socialist views and took an active part in political activities. The intention of the Yuai Kai in proposing the formation of this Confederation was to further the trade union movement in Japan, to unite all unions, even those not belonging to the Yuai Kai, with the Yuai Kai as leader, and to make this Confederation similar to the American Federation of Labour. The Seishin Kai and the Shinyu Kai, however, joined with the object of obtaining the same power of voting on important questions as the Yuai Kai, thus increasing their influence in the labour movement of Japan.

Under these circumstances a certain amount of friction naturally arose. However, they continued their relationship as members of the Confederation until May Day of 1921, when the divergence of fundamental interests became so great that the Yuai Kai gradually realised the advisability of separation. At a meeting of the higher officials of the Tokio Federation on 21 May, Mr. Tanahashi, chief officer of that federation, announced the attitude of the Yuai Kai in this matter as follows :

> In spite of objections coming from some of the extreme Socialists, the Tokio Federation of the Yuai Kai will continue to conform strictly to trade union principles. While we are eager to destroy the present system of society and to build it anew, we still definitely oppose such violent measures as some of the extreme Socialists propose. We will endeavour to introduce a new system of society based on trade unionism, and even though the extreme Socialists play with the word "revolution" we firmly believe and assert that their principles are obsolete and that it is our principles only which will bring about true social reform.

The meeting decided unanimously for the withdrawal of the Tokio Federation of the Yuai Kai and other unions belonging to the Yuai Kai, such as the Tokio Iron Workers' Union (*Tokio Tekko Kumiai*), the Union of Spinning Mill Workers (*Boseki Rodo Kumiai*), and the Tokio Electricity, Engineering, and Iron Workers' Union (*Tokio Denki Oyobi Kikaiko Kumiai*). It is expected that after the withdrawal of the Yuai Kai the Confederation of Trade Unions will no longer be such a powerful

organisation (7). Mr. Tanahashi, in his announcement, reveals a new aspect of the Yuai Kai showing that the Yuai Kai is becoming the real confederation of Japanese labour, since this decision of its Tokio Federation will affect the future not only of the Yuai Kai but of the Japanese labour movement in general.

Activity of the Labour Unions

In recent years numerous labour disputes have occurred. In 1919 there were 2,388 involving 335,225 workers, and of this number 497, affecting 63,137 workers, developed into strikes. In 1920 there were 1,069 disputes, involving 127,491 workers, of which number 282 developed into strikes and affected 36,371 workers. Many of these strikes were of a serious character, notably those of the printers of 16 important newspaper companies in the city of Tokio, the workers in the Tokio military arsenal and in the Okumura Electricity Company in the city of Kyoto in August, in the Kawasaki shipbuilding yards in September, in the Kamaishi Iron Mine, the Ashio Copper Mine, and the Hitachi Metal Mine in November 1919, in the state iron and steel foundry in the city of Yawata in February, that of the tramwaymen in the City of Tokio in April, and those in the Fuji spinning mills in July, and the Mitsukoshi department store in Tokio in December 1920. These disputes were not only serious in character, but were significant in many instances of the growth of the trade union movement, since the workers were supported and controlled by the organisations behind them.

Since 1919, when labour problems came prominently before the public, opinion among government authorities and employers was in favour of admitting the legality of trade unions organised "vertically"—i. e. on the basis of limitation of membership to workers in one factory or one workshop. The Minister of Home Affairs, who is in charge of the control of public safety in the matter of strikes, was an advocate of this view. Therefore it was considered by the workers that the most important problem in the trade union movement in Japan was that of gaining the employers' recognition of trade unions organised "horizontally"—i. e. including workers in various factories and workshops in the same industry. In the various disputes and strikes of recent years, this claim has been emphasised ; it constituted the chief demand in the strikes in the Ashio copper mine, the Hitachi metal mine, and the Fuji spinning mills. But in no case did the action of the workers achieve the desired result.

Since the beginning of 1921, new light has been thrown upon this question. It may be explained that in Japan the "recognition of labour unions" is understood in two senses—in a negative sense, which consists in recognising their actual existence, and making no attempt to destroy them or to hinder their develop-

(7) *Tokio Nichi Nichi*, 21 and 22 May 1921.

ment, and in a positive sense, which consists in recognising the right of labour unions to bargain for the betterment of labour conditions, and showing willingness to negotiate with the representatives of the trade unions to which the workers belong. Recognition in the first sense was gained after the struggle of the Pan-Japanese Miners' Federation in connection with a dispute in the Ashio copper mine in April 1921, when the Furukawa Mining Company, the proprietors of the mine, agreed to recognise the Pan-Japanese Miners' Federation, and promised not only not to prevent the development of the Federation in so far as it was consistent with the carrying on of the business of the company, but also to adopt a favourable attitude towards this development. The dispute in the Ashio Mine was followed by strikes in the city of Osaka, first between the Osaka Electric Lighting Company and the Union of Electrical Workers, which is affiliated to the Federation of Labour Unions of Western Japan (*Kansai Rodo Domei Kai*). After a struggle lasting 20 days, the union gained the recognition of its right of collective bargaining. Again, in a dispute between the Fujinagata Shipbuilding Company and its employees, led by members of the Osaka Union of Shipbuilding Workers (*Nihon Zosenko Kumiai*), and supported by the Yuai Kai, although the workers' demand for the recognition of the labour union (comprising workers not only in that works but also in other works) was not granted, an agreement was reached by which the company consented to negotiate with the labour unions organised by the workers in the Fujinagata ship yard only, while on the other hand freedom for workers in these yards to enter other labour unions was acknowledged. Following on this, numerous strikes occurred in the cities of Osaka and Kobe, which ended in a serious agitation in the Kawasaki ship yards; in these strikes the foremost and unanimous claim of the workers was the recognition of the union by the employers. So far the right of bargaining has not been granted to any "horizontally" organised unions, but the establishment of factory committees has since become more general, and attempts on the part of labour unions are being made to link up the various factory committees with the object of working towards a common end.

General Features of the Yuai Kai

As will have been seen, the Yuai Kai has played a very conspicious part in the labour movement of recent years. Indeed, it is the only general federation of labour in Japan which is on a firm footing. Therefore it may be useful to give some idea of its organisation and principles. The details of its early struggles and the changes through which it passed from a philanthropic society, as it was in the beginning, to a militant federation of labour, as it is to-day, will be omitted. In the year 1919 the Yuai Kai assumed an entirely new aspect. About this time new leaders, such as Aso, Tanahashi, Hisatome, Takayama, and Kangawa, entered the Yuai Kai one after another, replacing the

former leaders. Simultaneously, instead of Drs. Kuwata, Soyeda, Ogawa—prominent members of the Society for the Study of Social Politics (*Shakeiseisaku Gakkai*)—new advisers such as Yoshino, Takano, Kitasawa, Horie, Ichigasaki, Morito, and Kushida—men who were considered to have more or less Socialist leanings—took their place. At the annual congress in September 1919 the constitution was fundamentally altered ; instead of merely Yuai Kai, the name of the Federation became the General Federation of Labour of Great Japan (*Dainippon Rodo So Domei Yuai Kai*). This was afterwards again changed to that of General Federation of Japanese Labour (*Nihon Rodo So Domei Yuai Kai*). Although Mr. Bunji Suzuki was elected president at the congress, he became only one of the leading officers of the General Federation. At the same congress the principles and the declaration of the Federation were announced, differing widely from those of the Yuai Kai at its outset. The original programme limited itself to a statement of general principles, namely :

(1) The moral, intellectual, and technical training of members in accordance with common ideals.
(2) The improvement of the position of the members by sure and steady methods and by combined effort.
(3) The achievement of the ideals of solidarity by co-operation and mutual aid.

The new demands of the organisation are very definite and concrete, and include :

(1) Labour not to be regarded as a commodity or an article of commerce.
(2) Freedom of association of all workers.
(3) Abolition of child labour.
(4) Establishment of a minimum wage.
(5) Equal pay for work of equal value.
(6) Establishment of a weekly rest.
(7) Introduction of the 8-hour day or 48-hour week.
(8) Abolition of night work.
(9) Appointment of women inspectors.
(10) Establishment of a system of social insurance.
(11) Enactment of conciliation and arbitration legislation.
(12) Provision against unemployment.
(13) Equal treatment for native and foreign workers.
(14) Supply of dwelling houses through public funds.
(15) Establishment of a system of workmen's compensation.
(16) Improvement of working conditions in home industries.
(17) Abolition of peonage and indentured labour.
(18) Establishment of manhood suffrage.
(19) Amendment of the Public Safety and Order Police Law.
(20) Democratisation of the educational system.

Accompanying its programme is the following declaration of general principles.

Man is by nature free ; we as workers therefore declare that we are human beings and ought not to be bought for wages at market rates. We should also have freedom of association. At a time when the concentrated power of capital is exploiting labour and endeavouring to materialise its own personality, the workers must teach the capitalists by the power of their organisation that the social order is not controlled by wealth but is maintained by the personality of those participating in

production. Since the development of material civilisation has begun to mislead us, the entire world has become tainted with the poison of capitalism. Overproduction and trade depression attack the world alternately, and the workers, according to the economic situation, are either treated as accessories to the machinery or driven away from the factory. We declare, however, that we are not machines. We demand the organisation of society on the basis of human personality, permitting the full individual development of the workers through education, a settled life, and the right to control their own conditions.

Turning to the industrial condition of Japan, women workers are suffering in spinning mills, child workers are worn out by long hours, and the cry of the miners is heard from underground. The percentage of deaths among workers is increasing year by year, and the rate of infant mortality and the number of still births are growing greater, owing to the unsettled life of the workers. Strikes occur one after another, but freedom of association has not yet been recognised. Workers, in fact, are deprived of their rights as free citizens. It is a day of sorrow for Japanese workers. The time has come for the emancipation of Japanese producers. The world changes unceasingly, but goes forward, leaving Japan alone behind all. Therefore we Japanese workers declare to the world that we adhere to the spirit of the Peace Treaty, especially that of the Labour clauses, and we will not hesitate to sacrifice ourselves in the endeavour to bring about the rule of peace, liberty and equality.

The structure and scope of the General Federation of Japanese Labour has undergone several changes in recent years. Up to August 1920 it was organised in three district federations and two industrial departments. Subsequent changes brought about an organisation according to industry or trade. For the present, however, unions organised on a local basis and including different trades or industries are also admitted. In its earlier organisation the Federation was composed exclusively of such local branches.

In August 1920 the three district offices directly under the control of the headquarters in Tokio comprised the eastern district office in Tokio, the western district office in Osaka, and the Kyushu district office. The eastern district office in Tokio controlled the district federations (*Rengo Kai*) of Joto, with three local branches ; Kyobashi ; Jonan, with eleven local branches and three industrial unions, which comprise workers employed in the same industry who belong to different local branches ; and Koto, with two local branches and three industrial unions. In addition, there were twenty-two local branches and one industrial trade union which did not belong to any federation under the Eastern district office. The western district office in Osaka controlled the district federations of Osaka, with sixteen local branches ; Kobe, with eight local branches ; and Kyoto ; in addition to three local branches not attached to any federation. The Kyushu district office controlled the Kyushu district federation with three local branches, as well as five branches not belonging to the federation.

Directly under the control of headquarters there were two industrial departments : the Japan Seamen's Federation of the Yuai Kai (*Niho Kaiin Domai Yuai Kai*), with five local branches, and the Miners' Department of the Yuai Kai (*Yuai Kai Kozanbu*). The latter included one union with seven local branches, two federations with six branches, and fourteen branches not belonging to any union or federation.

The control of the Federation is vested in the central executive council, composed of the president, chief secretary, treasurer, and some executive officers, all chosen at the annual convention. Various local federations have their own local committees of a similar character. At headquarters there is an international department for facilitating relations with trade unions in foreign countries. The office of President is vacant at present. Mr. Bunji Suzuki, the organiser of the Yuai Kai, who had occupied the post of president since its foundation, at the last congress expressed his desire to retire and was made honorary president.

The present form of organisation is a result of modifications made by the congresses of August and October 1920. The annual congress of 1-3 October 1921 made some changes in the title of the organisation, dropping the word Yuai Kai, which literally means "friendly society". It was thought that the name gave a wrong impression of the objects of the organisation. Changes have also come about in the programme of the organisation, as sketched above, which also indicate its movement toward more strictly trade union principles. The demand, for instance, for manhood suffrage was struck off its programme.

Trade Union Legislation

In Japan there exists no law explicitly recognising trade unions, nor is there any law or regulation which forbids the existence of labour organisations. However, Section 17 of the Public Safety and Order Police Law (*Chiankeisatsu Ho*), promulgated on 10 March 1900, has recently been criticised as an obstacle to the progress of the labour movement. This Section reads as follows :

> It is forbidden to use violence and intimidation against another, or publicly to insult another, for any of the purposes stated in the following paragraphs, or to incite or instigate another for the purpose stated in the second of the following paragraphs :
>
> (1) To compel another to enter or to prevent him from entering any such association or organisation formed with a view to collective action regarding the conditions of remuneration of labour.
>
> (2) To compel an employer to discharge a worker or to refuse an application for employment, or to compel a worker to cease work or to refuse the offer of employment, in order to carry out a collective strike or lock-out.
>
> (3) To apply compulsion to the other party to a contract concerning the conditions of remuneration of labour.

The number of workers arrested and imprisoned on a charge of contravening Section 17 of this Law during recent years is as follows :

	Arrested	Imprisoned
1914	18	5
1915	64	8
1916	40	16
1917	138	20
1918	359	111
1919	113	9 *
1920	185	—

(*) 34 cases not yet acted upon at the time this information was secured.

The effect of this Section of the Police Law is variously interpreted. When the procedure adopted by the Japanese Government in appointing the workers' delegate to the Third International Labour Conference was questioned, the Government and workers' delegates expressed very different views on the subject. The workers' delegate maintained that the organisation of trade unions was almost impossible under this Law, while the Government delegate stated that the Section in question was only intended to facilitate the maintenance of order in times of industrial dispute. Most of the important trade unions include the amendment or abolition of Section 17 as a prominent item on their programme, and several Bills have been introduced into Parliament for its amendment, but have failed to secure enactment.

In February 1920 the Government appointed a Temporary Commission for the Investigation of Industrial Problems (*Rinji Sangyo Chosa Kai*) to prepare laws on trade unions and industrial disputes. The proceedings of this Commission were private, but, as more than a year has now elapsed since the last meeting of the Commission, it appears that it failed to arrive at a final text for these measures.

At a time when serious labour disputes were in progress in the industrial centres of western Japan, the Osaka Industrial Society (*Osaka Kyogo Kai*), which includes the largest employers in that city, submitted a proposal to the Government recommending the enactment of a trade union law and the establishment of a court for dealing with industrial disputes. In addition the Society drew up a set of model rules for a system of factory committees, with a view to encouraging its introduction. The Association for Co-operation between Capital and Labour (*Kyocho Kai*) [8] has also drafted a Bill on the workers' committee system [9] and submitted it to the Government, asking that the necessary measures be taken for its enactment.

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[8] *International Labour Review*, Vol. I, No. 2, Feb 1921, pp. 39-46.

[9] *Tokio Asahi*, 13 Oct. 1921.