

Urgent Appeal

Join our Nationwide Campaign for the National Railway Struggle

Our nationwide movement to support the struggle against the division and privatization of the National Railway and for the reinstatement of 1,047 unfairly dismissed national railway workers
June 8th, 2014

“Don’t put out the fire of the national railway struggle!” With this slogan, we founded the Nationwide Campaign for the National Railway Struggle in June 2010. In response to the call of Doro-Chiba the new movement confirmed its principle: maintain the basic demand of revoking the unjust dismissal of 1,047 workers, against the concessive “political settlement” of the vital issue of the dismissal in April of 2010. The start of the Nationwide Campaign for the National Railway Struggle seemed at the outset like the voyage of a small boat without charts in the face of an irresistible reactionary tide. However, the movement has since been invigorated by ardent supporters from all parts of Japan.

The judgments handed down at the Tokyo District Court on June 29th, 2012 and Tokyo High Court on September 25th, 2013 were the results of the strong development of this movement. For the first time in the series of trials concerning the national railway workers’ dismissal cases, the courts ruled that “the criteria of employment or non-employment of the new company, Japan Railway, were worked out with the apparent intention of unlawfully discriminating those National Railway employees who were opposed to the Division and Privatization of the National Railway”. It is a great step forward in achieving our goal of revoking the dismissal of the 1,047 national railway workers and gaining their reinstatement.

We have succeeded so far in exposing the true facts and real nature of the unfair labor practice committed by the government in complicity with the former National Railway and Japan Railway Companies, and their intention to break up the national railway labor movement through a precise system of overall dismissal and discriminative and selective (re-)employment of National Railway employees. Thus a steady step forward has been made in overthrowing the whole structure of the devastating condition of the labor world created by the onslaught of the Division and Privatization of the National Railway, namely, the forcible implementation of privatization, outsourcing, casualization, and deregulation and so on by means of the so-called “National Railways Method”. It is no exaggeration to say that our recent achievement is a vital key to opening up a new stage in our struggle to crush the largest ever assault on the Japanese labor movement in the post-war era (namely, the National Railway Privatization) and to overcome the endless setbacks and concessions of the system-friendly labor movement. We are now sending out a critical and alarming message to the whole of Japanese labor.

Opposed to the April 9th Political Settlement (between the ruling LDP and the Japan National Railway Union headquarters) in 2010, we have been kindling the fire of the national railway struggle all over Japan.

The decision on the case about the national railway issue will be given at the Supreme Court within a couple of months. Before that we’d like to call on you to gather your power in support of our movement, the Nationwide Campaign for the National Railway Struggle. The

30 years' struggle against the Division and Privatization of the National Railway, our endeavors to revive the militant labor movement, the remarkable development of the Nationwide Campaign of National Railway Struggle over the last four years: all of these efforts are now going to materialize into a powerful force, in close unity with the deep anger of working-class people against the severe conditions they face today. We are heading for a showdown. Let's make a fresh start for the struggle from now on!

The Shinzo Abe administration is desperately rushing ahead to exercise the right of "collective self-defense" and to revise the Constitution (with the article 9 that renounces war). The war drive is rampant in the world today, under the pressures of the terrible endless economic crisis. 300 Korean high-school students were killed in the sinking of the Sewol ferry and numerous workers died in a coalmine accident in Turkey. These brutal slaughters are the results of the neoliberal policies of moribund capitalism, which accelerates the total collapse of the society. Working-class people have begun to raise their angry voices all over the world. At this very moment, the Abe administration is deeply committed to revising the Worker Dispatch Law with the aim of deregulating working hours, setting up of Special Economic Zones to promote "total casualization of work force" and "liberalization of arbitrary dismissal". They are hoping to shoot a poisonous arrow into the heart of labor to kill it once and for all. Abe has gone too far. A solid and unified labor movement will boldly confront him and set free all of the power of the indignant working class.

The Division and Privatization of the National Railway, already responsible for killing 107 people in the Amagasaki (near Osaka and Kobe in west Japan) rail accident in 2005, has now brought about the catastrophic total collapse of rail safety in JR Hokkaido (northern Japan) today. The whole system of JR (Japan Railway) is now on the brink of breakdown. In spite of this critical situation, the greedy capitalists of the JR companies are intent on escalating outsourcing. Almost all branches of the railway business are going to be handed out to hundreds of subcontractors. The railway service is being divided into small pieces, together with the workers. The issue of the Division and Privatization of the National Railway has not been settled. We have to put a decisive end to the issue through our struggle.

The struggle of the Korean Railway Workers Union against railway privatization, started by a 23-day strike at the end of last year, showed us how the tide is turning and presented a fresh outlook for the future. While the international labor movement has so far had little experience of confronting privatization offensively and keeping unity, our Korean colleagues have succeeded in bringing public opinion over to the side of militant labor union through waging a courageous struggle against railway privatization.

In response to the Korean struggle, Doro-Chiba and Doro-Mito have risen up for a new struggle and are calling to establish a Confederation of All Motive Power Unions.

Doro-Chiba waged a strike on May 2nd to stop outsourcing and establish rail safety, a significant step in the historical attempt to expand the possibilities of the labor movement. Through this strike we have begun organizing not only workers from JR (Japan Railway Company) but also workers from CTS (Chiba Transport Service, a JR subcontractor), calling on them to fight together against outsourcing because rail safety is the Achilles's heel of outsourcing.

Doro-Mito rose up in strikes on May 10th and May 31st protesting the reopening of the earthquake-stricken and disrupted rail track between Tatsuta station, 16 kilometers from Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, and Hirono station. This marked a first step in the history of industrial actions in Japan, with a determined political agenda against the policies of the Abe administration which promotes the reopening of nuclear power plants and the export of nuclear plant facilities abroad, all the while totally neglecting the alarming and desolate situation in Fukushima over three years after the disaster. The recent strike by Doro-Mito on the nuclear issue could play an important role in linking up with other people who are similarly angry, in despair and isolated.

In line with these remarkable strikes, militant colleagues who belong to Japan National Railway Union (NRU, Kokuro) have launched fresh actions from their workplace to change the union under its current concessive leadership. The local branch in a Kohriyama (Fukushima Prefecture) railway factory is fighting against outsourcing and opposing the nuclear power plant; a Niigata branch is engaged in a struggle against the management's plan to contract out JR's car manufacturing factory.

Now is the time for our Nationwide Campaign for the National Railway Struggle to fully display its power. We are firmly determined to march on against every kind of difficulties until we achieve our purpose of reviving the militancy of labor movement. Only the united power of the working class is capable of creating historical change. Our sincere hope is to overcome the past weaknesses and limitations of the Japanese labor movement through developing and strengthening our Nationwide Campaign for the National Railway Struggle.

As earnest and passionate supporters of our movement we wholeheartedly call on you to put all of your power to help us achieve our goal of 100,000 signatures in our petition supporting the struggle of the 1,047 unfairly dismissed national railway workers, and to assist our efforts to gain a victorious verdict in the upcoming Supreme Court trial. Let's organize the Nationwide Campaign for the National Railway Struggle in every workplace and community, and establish a network of fighting people.

Today is a fresh start.

Let's fight for a powerful Nationwide Campaign for the National Railway Struggle!