

A Surge of Struggle for Conversion from “Rinjiko” to “Honko” at Nissan in 1952 and Thereafter

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Abstract : This paper deals with a surge of struggle for conversion from “Rinjiko” (temporary workers) to “Honko” (regular employees) at Nissan Motor in fall 1952 and thereafter. The headquarters of the All Japan Automobile Workers Union (JAWU) announced its new principle on wages in summer 1952, based upon equal pay for equal work. It targeted the abolition of many types of discrimination, including that between Honko and Rinjiko. This principle reactivated Nissan Branch’s struggle which had begun a year and a half previously. Attitudes of the Rinjiko, who were not union members, also changed from passive to active during the struggle. At last the company and the union consented to convert all those workers who the company admitted to be eligible to long employment. A total of 659 workers, three fourths of all Rinjiko, were converted next spring.

One of the disputed points in this struggle was screening. The Company insisted on the need for strict screening, however the union did not. This reminds us that the hiring process for manual workers (later called Honko) soon after the Second World War was similar to that of Rinjiko, lacking a screening procedure. This similarity prevented the former from justifying their advantaged benefits. This led to a strong sense of solidarity between them, which caused the surge of the struggle.

After a serious labor conflict in 1953, during which the union was dismantled and defeated, the company introduced two hiring systems of Honko. First was establishment of its training school for new junior high school graduates, and the second was to systematize the conversion from Rinjiko to Honko. Both systems had strict screening procedures. The company made a big wall between Honko and Rinjiko. To be a Honko a man needed to be selected. Screening justified differences among benefits between the two, and might break solidarity between them.

Keywords : automobile industry, regular employees, temporary workers, JAWU, labor history in Japan

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