

## Process of Organizing Blue-Collar Workers and White-Collar Staff at Nissan Heavy Industry

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**Abstract** : This paper deals with the organizing process of employees at Nissan Heavy Industry in the aftermath of WWII. At first blue-collar workers (*Koin*) started organizing themselves after the Trade Union Law was legislated. According to other studies on this union, they tried to organize a union comprised of workers alone, but failed. So they asked white-collar staff (*Shain*) to help them to unionize. It has been said that this offer from the discriminated workers was the reason both workers and staff were organized into one combined union. This paper contradicts that story, examining the process chronologically. The workers had not given up on a blue-collar union, and it was the staff, asked by the management, that proposed to create a single company-based union, and took the initiatives on organizing in order not to be a radical union. The brand-new union was organized under the hegemony of staff, so it was named Nissan Heavy Industry Employees Union, not Workers Union. One of the slogans which it adopted was “Democratization within the company” (DWC), and it interpreted DWC in an egalitarian manner; it insisted upon abolition of disparate treatment between the workers and the staff. It appears a progressive aspect, but it had two consequences. First, to maintain the staff hegemony required egalitarian policies because of the big discrepancy between labor conditions of the two. To be integrated as employees of the same company, it had to make common interests recognized by both types of membership, so they needed to abolish any discrimination. Second, it had a function to protect the existing order of the company under the new era of Democracy without touching its other systems, i.e. its power structure, its decision-making procedure, the managerial prerogative, and so on. It therefore canalized DWC into only equal treatment between the two, though elsewhere at that time it had various forms, e.g. “production control” tactic, workers’ participation in management, and so on. Consequently, the union was at first characterized by its very conservative policies, which might have been similar to those of the Industrial Patriotic Association (*Sanpo*) during the war. However, it came to change its character after the summer of 1946 when the management council, composed of the representatives of both the company and the union, was inaugurated under the first collective agreement.

**Keywords** : company-based labor union, democratization within the company

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