

From “Production Recovery Movement” to “Production Recovery Struggle” Policy Development of Nissan Heavy Industry Labor Union in the latter half of 1947

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Abstract : This paper deals with policy development of the Nissan Heavy Industry Labor Union in the latter half of 1947. After the end of May 1947, the union recognised the replacement of the president at Nissan as democratisation of the company management. It tried to establish a good relationship with the new company management, and it started a “production recovery movement” under its own initiative. In this movement the union members responded to difficulties of production at their shopfloor, resolving them by themselves. The company management supported it.

Although the industrial relations became slightly strained because of bargaining on a wage increase soon afterwards, the union believed that the wage hike was not realized because of external financial capital and Government policy. It still assumed that the company management could take the side of the union in opposition to outside pressure preventing a wage increase, and it continued in its commitment to the policy of production recovery.

At the end of November, the union formally demanded a wage increase by the company, and announced it would initiate a struggle for this objective. However, this demand remained not fully realized after collective bargaining over two weeks without a strike. After a compromise, the union executives came to realize that the company management was in direct opposition to the union. This new recognition made the union change to an aggressive attitude toward the management.

In addition, during this struggle, a new tactic called “production recovery struggle” was introduced, which was inspired by a new policy of the Congress of Industrial Unions of Japan (Sanbetsu Federation). This tactic required union members to identify difficulties of production at their shopfloor, similar to the previously implemented production recovery movement, but this time they demanded that management should remove them, and, unless such problems were resolved, they should stop production. So it was sometimes called a sabotage tactic. This new tactic is thought to be one of the origins of the “shopfloor struggle” well-known in later years.

Keywords : Nissan Automobile, Sanbetsu Federation, labor history, production recovery struggle, All Japan Automobile Workers Union

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