

Abstracts

What Can Enterprise-based Unions Do?

Michio Nitta (University of Tokyo)

A commonly accepted view has articulated that one of the main organizational characteristics of enterprise-based unions in Japan lies in membership limited to regular employees of the particular enterprise. If the worker is a regular employee, the person is eligible and is required to be a union member regardless of whether a blue collar or a white collar worker. The organizational setting as the basis for union activities is strongly inclined toward the interest of employees, not the working class. This article exemplifies some anomalies in the history of enterprise-based unionism with regard to 'employee' orientation. The first is the movement regarding non-regular workers by enterprise-based unions in the manufacturing sector in the 1950s to early 1960s. Here, enterprise-based unions of regular workers fought hard to make large numbers of limited-term contract workers into regular employees, and largely succeeded. They also tried to help workers of onsite sub-contractor companies called Shagaiko (outside workers) organize a union, but with limited success at the time. The second is the movement of sales staff unions in the life insurance industry in the 1950s and 1960s. Unlike manufacturing sector unions, they pursued a 'separated-union strategy' avoiding integration with an office workers' union in the same company. The movement resulted in a higher status of sales staff largely dependent on commissions for remuneration. As shown in these examples, enterprise-based unionism has a broad experience in its history. The author suggests the need for a new vision of enterprise-unionism that can help people think about what enterprise-based unions can do.

Economic Impacts of Trade Unions: Findings and Issues

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This paper summarizes the findings of research overseas and in Japan, and examines problems concerning the effects of unions on wages, exit rate, employment adjustment and productivity. According to recent Japanese data, unions have an influence on wages for both males and females. Regarding the exit rate, though there are many studies which argue that unions lower the exit rate, it is unclear which union-influenced working conditions have changed and resulted in a lower exit rate. Although Japanese unions reduce employment changes, unionized firms also allow personnel cuts in harsh times. The more studies are necessary for evaluating the effect of unions on productivity.

An Analysis of the Operation and Effect of Labor-Management Joint Consultation from the Perspective of Content of Negotiations

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Through a questionnaire survey and investigations based on hearings, this paper examines the labor-management consultation system that is currently being practiced in Japanese firms today. In particular, the labor-management consultation system is analyzed from the perspective of the content of negotiations. In other words, the labor-management consultation system is examined not with respect to the system itself but rather in terms of its operation. The analysis sheds light on the following three points. First, according to the analysis of adjustment effort and consent level in the operation of the labor-management consultation system, complex negotiation issues were clarified. This reveals the difficulty of obtaining agreement on any issue without

taking into account the opinions of union members. Second, the analysis clarified the process for consolidating and adjusting the opinions of various employees by examining the success of the labor-management consultation system. In addition, the factors contributing to improvement in the consent level for the labor-management consultation system are analyzed using a questionnaire survey; the results show that operation is a major factor. Regarding the content of some negotiations, the consent level has risen because a special committee was set up, which enabled labor and management to exchange information. Third, even if the labor-management consultation system did function as mentioned previously, the system would not be able to improve the level of consent on the introduction of early and voluntary retirement programs which is an issue involving highly complex negotiations. Retirement is not a provision in the event of dismissal by the company. Therefore, an incentive system should be designed as an alternative to retirement. If it is difficult to estimate an individual's chances of remaining in the company, and if there are major differences between the incentive systems approved by the management and the union, accommodating multiple opinions will prove to be difficult.

Study on Cases of Organizing Non-Regular Employees in Enterprise-based Unions

Shuichi Hashimoto (Kokugakuin University)

This article studies ten cases in which enterprise-based unions organized non-regular employees in order to clarify the current situation of the organizations, their aims, the outcome for the union and the problems. In these cases, the number of non-regular employees has increased and some or most of them became the essential workforce. However, they faced many problems in the companies. The unions were alarmed by the situation, and so organized non-regular employees who had become the essential workforce. The companies accepted the union shop agreement. Through this process, the treatment of non-regular employees began to improve, and the union activities were activated. The unions still face many problems in the future, but have gained a stronger presence and play a bigger role.

The Function of Labor Union in Turnaround Process

Makoto Fujimoto (The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training)

The measures for turnaround that recovers the corporate that falls into excessive debt or the financing failure tends to be advanced by the management, because the prospect of the improvement is requested to be applied as early as possible. However, the labor union can also play an important role considering that the influence of turnaround to the employee who works at the corporate in turnaround process is large and that employees' motivation can become important for corporate recovery. This thesis finds the following facts about the role of labor union in turnaround process from the case study of enterprises that experienced turnaround. First, labor union plays the role to suppress the adverse effect that the adjustment of employment and the working condition such as downsizing and the pay reductions gives the employee through negotiations with the management and getting information from the management. Secondly, the labor union can play the role to improve employees' motivation for turnaround by retraining and enlightening of employee together with the management. Thirdly when corporate governance of the management decreases during turnaround process, it is possible for the labor union to maintain corporate governance through the proposal about Management etc. Fourthly, the above-mentioned activities of the labor union need various requirements, including the support by the industrial labor union.