

## Abstracts

### Organization, Activities and Significance of Regional General Unions in Japan: In Terms of the Resolution of Individual Labor Disputes

**Haksoo Oh** (The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training)

While Japan's general unions have a long history, the appearance of community unions in the late 1980s was the first real start of individual association unions. The formation and enhanced operations of Rengo (the largest trade union national center in Japan) in 1996 and Local Union of Zenroren (the second largest trade union national center in Japan) in 2002 in addition to Zenrokyo have led to the current renaissance area in general unions. One of the most important activities of general unions is to resolve individual labor disputes. The number of cases resolved has increased in recent years, not only recording a number of cases enough equal to that of governments or the judiciary but also reaching a rate of 67.9% for independent resolutions by collective bargaining with companies by the general unions, which shows the strength of the general unions in dispute resolution. Average annual revenue of general unions is approximately 4 million yen, 67.4% of which is from union fees and the rest from affiliation fees or company money for settlement from related workers and so on. The average number of full-time union officials is 1.1 per general union, a half of whom in principle spends 24 hours 365 days a year entirely for general union activities. The general unions resolve disputes arising from violation or disregard of labor laws by employers and also give opportunities for them to learn about labor laws as well as resolving cases which governments cannot. Such activities need public support.

### Legal Disputes concerning Regional General Unions

**Tetsunari Doko** (Hokkaido University)

Regional General Unions (RGU) have been organized based on each industry or region with the aim of correcting weak points of Enterprise Unions since around 1955. The RGU raised many practical issues at Labor Commissions and theoretical problems regarding labor laws. From the 1980s until the present day, the Community Unions have highlighted the unionization of workers at small and medium-sized enterprises in their activities. There are many disputes concerning the RGU. Recently, these disputes add up to two thirds of new filings for unfair labor practices and appeals of conciliation. A typical legal dispute for the RGU starts by a worker joining the RGU after dismissal or other problems. This is followed by the RGU pursuing collective bargaining and the employer rejecting the bargaining. The Labor Commission regards the denial of collective bargaining as an unfair labor practice. The discussion in this article focuses mainly on such cases and while also taking an extensive look at related legal issues.