

Japan: Labor May Day in Onahama

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Onahama Mayday in the rehabilitation struggle from the earthquake/tsunami damages: 350 workers participated in the demonstration

Onahama is the southeastern industrialized port area of Iwaki city, which is located at the southeastern coastal part of Fukushima prefecture, and Onahama area is to the 50km south of the Fukushima No.1 nuclear plant.

IWAKI, Fukushima Pref. — The rally of the “2nd Onahama Mayday in the Rehabilitation Struggle” was held under the sponsorship of the Onahama branch of Zenkouwan (All Japan Harbor Workers Union: AJHWU) and unions of the Onahama Area Council of Unions at the Onahama Yokomachi Park on May 1, and 350 workers, including stevedores and transport workers of the port, gathered at the rally.

At the ad hoc Mayday committee, there was a proposal to refrain from the rally, demonstration and barbecue event voluntarily due to the earthquake/tsunami and the nuke disaster, but the committee agreed to go ahead with the rally and demonstration, affirming the absolute necessity of workers’ struggle for their own and popular causes in dealing with the earthquake/tsunami disasters, nuke crisis and radiation threat, and unemployment problems.

Mayday rally paid a silent tribute to all the victims of the disasters at its outset.

Mr. Niizuma, president of the Onahama branch of Zenkouwan (AJHWU), gave a speech to the rally in the name of the Mayday committee, and he asserted: “Let’s press the firms and administrative bodies. And the first step is nothing other than the unity and solidarity of workers.”

Mr. Matsumoto, general secretary of the AJHWU, took the podium as an invited participant, and he said: “Rengo (Japanese Trade Union Confederation: JTUC) can do nothing. It is dominated by the unions of nuke-related businesses, and it has just adopted a pro-nuke resolution. But the Onahama Mayday rally here is held under the banner of denuclearization. Major construction firms are said to have begun their collusions to grab the rehabilitation concessions. Rehabilitation of workers’ ordinary lives is the real rehabilitation: there will not be the real rehabilitation without workers’ active interventions.”

Mr. Yutaka Suzuki, president of the Onahama Area Council of Unions, presented his relative’s serious state of damages, and said: “my cousin of fisherman is still missing. These are our actual situation, from which we have to start our rehabilitation efforts.”

Mr. Ryou’ichi Hattori, lower-house deputy of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), took the podium and stated: “We stand for no-Nuke energy policy. We will work for denuclearization together with you.”

After the solidarity messages of the SDP and JCP representatives, a representative of a Zenkoku-Ippan (National Union of General Workers: NUGW) union presented various resolutions to the rally,

and he reported that his union set up its labor-counselling desk immediately after the earthquake/tsunami, that a lot of workers visited the desk for its counselling, which showed that there were numerous cases of labor-standard violations and wrongful dismissals under the pretext of the disasters. He also reported on a nuke-plant worker's case: the worker was asked to go to the workplace, although he himself was much reluctant to do so. Finally, he concluded his speech, asserting that the worst disasters were job losses and radiation-exposed labor.

At the rally, Ox-Tiger Brigade, a disaster-relief group of the metropolitan area, gave its ardent solidarity message, and a member of the group sang a song for rehabilitation efforts.

Finally, the rally adopted the proposed resolutions, and the participants marched through the streets of Onahama.

P.S.

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