

Sōdōmei's Declaration at the 1924 Convention⁹ The labor movement in our country is now facing its most critical crossroads. . . . Before capitalism in our country has had a chance to develop smoothly, it has taken the form of imperialism because of the pressure exerted by the fierce worldwide imperialistic competition. Imperialism is the last stage of capitalism. This means that capitalism in our country, without passing through the stage of liberalism, is becoming militaristic and is endowed with the flavor of autocracy. For example, it creates many hurdles to suppress the freedom of the proletariat. We must be aware of the fact that the European war has given our proletariat a sense of self-awareness and the current high tide of worldwide class struggle has raised the intellectual standards of a minority of our proletariat. However, this minority has not been able to perceive clearly the roles and functions they must play. As a result, democratization of our proletariat movement has been difficult. In order to be true to their ideals, these minority members have tended to insist on purity, which has resulted in inflexibility. We can declare unequivocally that, in the past, the labor movement in our country developed in accordance with changes in the capitalistic development. However, if we are to persist in this same old course, we shall be committing a serious mistake for our future. This is so because more than ever we are forced to formulate policies, that are more realistic and positive. We are now able to observe accurately both the tendencies inherent in the development of capitalism in this country and the advance in the power of the working class. We are now at the threshold of turning the labor union movement of a small number of people into a movement for the masses. Frankly, we cannot expect full liberation of the working class by a Diet dominated by the bourgeoisie. We must plan for the development of labor unions in our country by the following means: after the implementation of universal suffrage, we must use our right to vote effectively and gain partial political advantages; we must promote political awareness among the proletariat; and we must find ways and means of promoting our goals through participation in international labor conferences. We must fulfill the true spirit of the labor union movement by effecting mergers of separate unions and organizing nonunion members, both of which are to be based on the community of interest among the working class. We must work toward our ultimate goals, and at the same time acquire present benefits as well. The militant labor union members of today possess a clear ability for judgment and are strongly class conscious. They may take advantage of modified policies given by the ruling class in an attempt to dull the revolutionary spirit of the working class,

but they will never be corrupted by such policies. The movement to liberate the proletariat must change its tactics from time to time, taking into account the conditions of the enemy as well as the power of our friends. We hereby pledge that, regardless of whatever tactics we may take in accordance with practical considerations, we do not deviate from the basic principle of liberation of the proletariat.

Basic Principles

1. We shall endeavor to improve our economic well-being and increase our knowledge through the power of organization and through the groups established to promote mutual aid.
2. With resolute courage and effective tactics, we shall engage in an all-out war against the oppression of the capitalist class.
3. We firmly believe that the working class and capitalist class cannot exist side by side. Through the power of labor unions, we shall endeavor to build a new society in which the working class is completely liberated and where freedom and equality prevail.