

CLRC ex officio acted as conciliator five times, the strike finally terminated and subsequently, employers and employees started to form rather cooperative relations with each other in Japan, shifting away from antagonistic relations.

2 Wage adjustment through the annual spring labour offensive

With the Japanese economy growing sharply since the mid-1950s, workers started their labour movement, called the "annual spring labour offensive." The annual spring labour offensive had significant impacts on Japan's wage-setting practices until the 1980s and played a role in distributing the fruits of Japan's economic growth.



The annual spring labour offensive (in March 26, 1974) [In Hibiya Park, Tokyo] (Photograph from the Kyodo News)

The annual spring labour offensive is Japan's unique wage adjustment system in which trade unions in each industry concurrently make

their wage hike demands in springtime (February to April), negotiate with their employers with instructions from their superior organizations (such as the National Center), and pull out a response from their employers. Usually, metal, electric and other major industrial sectors of the International Metal worker's Federation-Japan Council (IMF-JC) first gained wage hikes, which then spread out to major private firms and subsequently influenced wage hikes in private railways, and public enterprises such as JNR and postal services. Such wage hikes further influenced the wage hike level for small- and medium-sized enterprises and unorganized workers. In addition, the annual spring labour offensive also influenced the National Personnel Authority's recommendation regarding the salary level for central government workers.

The annual spring labour offensive started in 1955 when eight industrial trade unions started a joint wage hike movement. The movement subsequently expanded in 1956, absorbing JNR and some other public sector trade unions. The wage hike level achieved through the private railway's strike used to serve as a benchmark for the overall wage hike level and in this manner, the CLRC reconciles a private railway's strike almost every year.

In 1964, public corporations' trade unions (such as the National Railway Workers' Union) started a half-day strike in a similar manner to private railway's trade unions. The meeting between Ikeda (Prime Minister) and Ohta (Chairman, General Council of Trade Unions of Japan) confirmed the principle to determine public worker's wage hikes in line with the private sector's wage hike level. Henceforth, the annual spring labour offensive turned into a joint wage-hike movement of the public and private sectors. Private railway trade unions and the JNR union jointly enhanced their