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# THE CAMPAIGN OF PETITIONING FOR THE INAUGURATION OF A NATIONAL DIET

—THE PROCESS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE  
SANYO LIBERAL PARTY—

By Seichū NAITŌ\*

## FOREWORD

The year 1880 saw the upsurging clamor for liberty and popular rights being consolidated into a nationwide movement for demanding a speedy inauguration of a National Diet at the same time that various layers of the nation continued to have their respective class interests promoted. This was highly significant in the historical process of the Japanese nation in that it marked the first instance of a nationally organized resistance against the contemporary ruling authority. As the prevailing clamor for liberty and popular rights was organized into a vast movement on a national scale embracing all classes of the people, it marked a significant development for it was intrinsically distinguishable from the sporadic farmers' rebellious uprisings which were often recorded during the ancien regime, and, seen in this light, the movement for liberty and popular rights would well be defined as a democratic revolutionary movement.

An attempt to grasp the full scope of the petitioning campaign for the inauguration of a national diet, from the angle of an organized resistance, will first have to tackle with the problem of through what process such a movement came to be organized. This, in essence, will be searching into the process of the establishment of an authority based on a concrete class relation within the framework of the very movement. Founded on the different classes with often conflicting interests, the movement, from the very outset, was inevitably bound to carry inherent causes of split. Viewed in this way, the development of class interests in the process of the movement for liberty and popular rights is obviously invested with a special significance.

The present treatise especially deals with the development of the petitioning campaign for the inauguration of a national diet as seen in Oka-

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yama prefecture, with special emphasis placed on the process of the organization of the Sanyo Liberal Party in the Bizen-Bicchu district of that prefecture. Such process, as compared with the case of the Mimasaka Liberal Party born in the Mimasaka area, is undeniably pregnant with a number of issues, eloquently suggesting distinct local characteristics.

### 1. **Conflict between Central Government and Okayama Prefectural Government on Land Tax Reform.**

There is no denying that the first issue to be solved by a bourgeois revolution was a solution of the land problem, which, essentially was tantamount to an agrarian revolution at the hands of the farmers. As early as 1871, two policies had come to the fore as far as the land revolution was concerned, as evidenced by a contemporary record saying that "recent rumours that land would be distributed evenly are causing wealthy people no small worry and the poor people so much joy. However, they are, mere unfounded rumours which can never be realised." In opposition to a prefectural edict issued on the occasion of the abolishment of the feudal clan and the establishment of prefectures in the initial stage of the Meiji era, local farmers rose in revolt with a view to forcibly realising the desired "balanced distribution of land." Where as the Okayama clan under the rule of the feudal lord Ikeda had seen practically no case of farmers' uprisings, November, 1871, saw farmers' revolt bursting into widespread uprisings in Tawara-Shomomura village and twelve other villages in Iwari county, Minami Sakoda village in Akasaka county and Kawachi village and twenty-six other villages in Tsudaka county and Terayama village and eleven other villages in Jodo county, in Bizen district, all on the Sanyo highway in the southern part of the province. The horde of the revolting farmers, assaulting farmers, assaulting the living quarters of the local *shoya* (civilian village magistrate), wine-dealers and influential landowners, converged on the city of Okayama from all directions, with complaints about (1) the contemplated land reform, and with the demand that (2) their tax in kind be reduced to one-tenth of what they were currently paying consequent upon the reduction to one-tenth of the government salary, and that (3) they be exempted from paying for various farm implements and that (4) the maintenance of the emergency cereal storehouse be discontinued.

A Shukichi Mori, one of the big *shoya* of Kawamoto village in Akasaka county, who became the target of the violent assault, is reported to have remarked in his private memoirs to the effect that whereas the government authorities, intending to remove inequalities existing in the tax system, had

effected a reduction of land rents, agrarian people failed to comprehend this and resorted to acts of violence. Probably such was what could naturally be expected from the mouth of a big landowner, because the old land law contained a number of provisions highly detrimental to the interests of the land-owning population.

Ironically enough, the land reform effected by the government in the initial years of the Meiji era, right on the heels of the Meiji Restoration and on the eve of the historical feat of the abolishment of the feudal clans and the establishment of the modern prefectures, had resulted in a virtual rejection of poor people's desire for an equal distribution of the farming land and in a heavier tax burden. This circumstance inevitably led to the explosive outbursts of acts of violence among the protesting civilian population.

Records say that "due to unequal tax burdens, nobody would care to attend to farmlands" in the Oku county area, while Mansaburo Nozaki, *shoya* of Miyuki village, had to personally sue for justice with the complaint that the tenant farmers responsible for the area 17,000 *tsubo* wide in area could no longer stand the burden of paying the imposed tax. These facts, diametrically opposed to the afore-mentioned statement attributed to Shin-kichi Mori, probably attest to the true situation which then prevailed.

That the local farmers, united in their opposition to the government-inspired land reform plan, rose in open revolt with the demand that their tax burdens be reduced to one-tenth of the previous amount, was only logical. No wonder, then, that the government officials faced a great difficulty in the following year, 1872, in their effort to conduct an investigation into government-owned land, due to the suspicion on the part of the local populace, who, it should be noted, stood pat on their demand that an equitable distribution of land be effected.

In the face of such opposition staged by the agrarian population, the land tax reform of government was effected as scheduled.

On July 28, 1873, the decree on land tax reform was officially promulgated, and, on January 12, 1877, Vice-Governor Seichu Ishibe of Okayama prefecture proceeded to Tokyo with the advice:

"One thing should be considered with serious concern. Existing tax imposition being exacting to such an extent, a reform would inevitably result in a substantial decrease in the government tax revenue. Of course, cases of increased tax payment may occur in the district of newly-developed area long the seashore to the south or in the mountainous region to the north, where formerly practically no tax had been levied. On the whole, however, the government tax revenue would unavoidably see a substantial

reduction.”

What the Vice-Governor evidently had in mind was that the execution of the projected land tax reform be postponed, ostensibly on the excuse that the step, if forced, would entail a reduction of the government revenue. In spite of this, however, Masayoshi Matsukata, Tax Superintendent, proceeded along the prescribed course and, armed with a sufficiently-powerful theoretical rebuttal, decided to carry out the land tax reform as projected.

This, however, failed to ameliorate the condition in the prefectural area. The amount of rice yield, as reported by the farmers through the cooperatives, on the one hand, and as checked by the government authorities, on the other, would often vary. This, in other words, implied that, with the prefectural government of Okayama interposed, the interests of the Tokyo central government and of the local farmers stood diametrically opposed to each other. The situation worsened so much that, eventually on September 26, 1875, the prefectural Governor had to convene the farmers' representatives to a conference to persuade them on the acceptance of the government-imposed quotas to be paid as tax against the land they tilled.

The officials despatched from Tokyo stood firm on their demand that the farmers agree to the payment of no less than 170 *sho* per *tan* of their ricefield. Farmers' opposition was adamant. The conference had to be continued the following day. Conflicting views were expressed and discussions could seemingly have no end. Eventually it was agreed that final decision would be made on the first day of the following month.

Postponement, however, proved of no avail. In the face of the insurmountable impasse, the Governor and the prefectural officials in charge, on the last day of September, had to tend their resignations, apologizing for “their inability to persuade the farmers.”

On October 1, the Governor was informed by the farmers' representatives of their decision to postpone their final answer. On October 6, the Governor, accompanied by three of his subordinates, was on his way up to Tokyo. The party, however, had to retrace their course back to Okayama as it was known that the Tokyo government had released the Governor of his post under the date of October 7.

On his assumption of the new Okayama governorship on October 13, Goroku Takasaki, successor to Ishibe, fired a total of 111 officials of the prefectural government, the only official remaining unaffected by the wholesale dismissal order was Kyuzo Nagai, chief of the secretariat, the man who had penned the dismissal papers. On October 15, the new governor explained to the farmers' representatives that the step, daring as it was necessary to have the Imperial order obeyed, while the newlyemployed officials of

the prefectural government, at a hastily-summoned conference on October 17, heard the the governor admonish them against any "misdemeanor" as public servants, especially at this juncture when the central government was launching upon an extensive program of reforms.

This was the harbinger of a series of daring administrative measures, including the land tax reform, undertaken by the new prefectural chief, Railing from the defunct Satsuma (Kagoshima) clan.

The uncompromising attitude shown by the prefectural government overcame the threat of an wholesale resignations of the local farmers' representatives. Instead, they, within two weeks of the new governor's assumption of post, were left with no other alternative than assuring the prefectural government of their readiness to follow its policy, bringing the several-month old dispute to a conclusion.

Thus, it is seen that the projected land tax reform as contemplated by the Meiji regime men, at the outset, with a stiff opposition as witness the case of Okayama prefecture where the opposition was shared by the entire prefectural inhabitants, including the governor himself. It has already been described that destitute farmers, demanding an equitable distribution of land, took the leadership of the opposition movement. The detriment attendant upon the procedure of land tax being paid in kind consisted in the opportunity offered for rice merchants to deal in arbitrary speculation, which of ten resulted in aggravating the destitution on the part of farmers. The system being enforced under the old land ownership, which made possible such market operation by unscrupulous merchants, however, gradually came to be menaced by a succession of protesting moves staged by tenant farmers, who demanded that the tax payment be shifted to payments in money. It is recorded that as of January, 1874, the price of rice showed such a rise in the Okayama prefectural area that tenant farmers were reported to be extremely reluctant to pay tax in kind, this resulting in disputes arising between the landowners and these farmers.

In contrast to this, the nature of the opposition to the projected land tax reform just mentioned was somewhat different. Opposing to the reform, the local farmers' representative in so far as their own economic stand was identical that of the landowners and wealthy farmers, threatened to effect a resignation en bloc, and for what reason? What factors were there which drove the entire range of officials, including the governor himself, to the fate of dismissal? In so far as the opposition amounted to a legal procedure for clearing the way for a replenishment of the landowner system, it would seem contradictory that these people should have championed the movement. The senior officials of the Okayama prefectural government, at

this time, did comprise a number of local landowners and influential merchants. What, then, was the reason that these higher-classed people did turn their back to the projected reform?

Another aspect peculiar with the Okayama prefectural government was the fact that among many of the senior officials were found not a few, including Kiichi Nishi and Yokotaro Nakagawa, who later assumed a leading position in the nationwide movement aiming at the promotion of civilian rights of the people.

While retaining their status as landowners, these senior officials, as such, had the need to assess rents as low as possible, especially so as they faced a tenants' rebellion.

Now, the central government's directive that the rice yield per *tan* should be fixed at 170 *sho* far exceeded their own assessment.

Mansaburo Nozaki, a senior official of the prefectural government, hailing from the landowner-*shoya* class, had the notorious record of having opposed to any heavier tax levy during the days of the defunct Okayama clan. In staging the new opposition, he had a pretext that ricefields were in utter dilapidation. But, actually, he, by this, insinuated that his own ricefields, tilled by tenant farmers, failed to yield the desired amount of rice. Similar to this was the case of Zensaburo Sasaki. Being an official of the Okayama prefectural government, he was later to become deputy director of the Okayama rice dealers' association, and, as such, had the need to see the rents set at as low a level as possible, for such was a prerequisite for assuring a secure profit in the face of such marked rise in the price of rice, as was seen in February, 1874.

Local farmers' representatives as well as big farmers shared the same reason for fighting for a reduction of land tax, their desire being distinguishable from that of the medium and small scale farmers. They, still, could stand on a common ground of a concerted move of opposition to the land tax revision as contemplated by the Tokyo regime. Especially in the wake of the antifeudalism struggle staged by the lower-classed agrarian population in the Mimasaka area beginning in 1871 and the revolting moves of tenant farmers demanding that the tax be paid in money, they had of necessity to concentrate their effort on launching the opposition just for the purpose of safeguarding their own personal interests.

## II. Emergence of Campaigners for Popular Rights.

At the conference of the provincial officials convened in June, 1875, Kiichi Nishi, deputy councillor of the Okayama prefectural government,

affirming that a popular-elected parliament should be advisable, clarified his position as follows:

“Views have been advanced that the Japanese people have not yet attained an intellectual level justifying the speedy inauguration of a popular-elected parliament. For myself, I should say that such amounts to a great insult committed against the people. Although it should be conceded that at the present moment the farmers’ representatives and petty officials are never persons of distinguished talent and ability, men of real talent and capability should be sure to come up to the fore once a popular election is held.”

Born a petty *samurai*, Kiichi Nishi became apprentice-servant in the household of Setsusai Morita, a noted scholar, residing in the city of Kurashiki, and, later, started his career as a scholar of the Chinese classics affiliated with the cause of the Imperialism and antiforeignism. In 1869, he planned to sail to China. He did sail to Shanghai, where he stayed for a little more than a year. Returning home in 1871, he was hired as an instructor of Western learning at the prefectural college. Among his students at the college was such noted figures as Eitaro Komatsubara, Katashi Yamawaki and Shingo Seki, who, concerted, later volunteered to level attacks against the dictatorial regime in Tokyo, through their contributions to the journals “Hyonon Shimbun” and “Somo Zasshi”.

Nishi’s was a very colorful career. After being named a minor official of the Okayama prefectural government, he was charged with the subjugation of the farmers’ rebellion in the Mimasaka area, and later volunteered to sail to Formosa at the helm of 2,500 disgruntled *ex-samurai*. What, then, was the motive by the force of which he made the afore-mentioned statement? True, up to 1873, he was a faithful follower of the infant Tokyo regime. But, as he rose in official position in the Okayama prefectural government, he found himself confronted with lots of problems, including the projected reform of the land tax and the need of supplying the discontent *ex-samuri* with chances of new employment to feed them, which, combined, apparently strongly impressed him with the limitations of a dictatorial regime.

Nishi, who was among the attendants at the provincial officials’ conference in June, 1875, in his capacity of deputy councillor, was destined to be fired from his illustrious position as early as three months afterwards. This amply shows the extent to which Nishi, as a career man, had to undergo a course of bitter personal metamorphosis.

In the meantime, in Oda prefecture covering the area of old Bicchu province, bordering on Okayamn prefecture, move was afoot for presenting a petition to the local prefectural authorities, asking for the inauguration



of a "provisional assembly", mainly sponsored by Johei Sakata and old-time colleagues of Nishi. From this, it may be presumed that Sakata's move had considerably influenced Nishi's statement at the afore-mentioned Tokyo conference.

Violently repudiating the prefectural governor, who was reportedly slated to be named a member of the parliament in the event it was convened, for a number of measures of alleged maladministration, the petition, in particular, advocated the establishment of a local provisional assembly as a precursor to a central parliament. The local assembly, according to the petition, would be composed of three deputies from every small constituency and would discuss the entire range of administrative affairs including national law, taxes and even the behaviour of common people. After enough enlightenment had been made in this way, it was alleged, people would have been trained in the way of a democratic conduct of national as well as local matters. The petition further pointed out that, only after that stage had been attained, a central parliament could be convened, which would comprise sufficiently-enlightened deputies elected from the four corners of the land.

The suggestion contained in the petition was significant in that it heralded the popular move for the opening of a prefectural assembly, which, incidentally, was substantially identical with what Kiichi Nishi had been advocating.

Johei Sakata was not alone in this move, for, here, he was strongly backed by many local wealthy farmers and merchants. Reflecting the interests of local sericulture and spinning industrialists, the petition was accompanied by a statement of indictment of the prefectural officials on charges of their involvement in cases of official misdemeanor and corruption. Earlier in 1872, a prefecture-run financial company had been set up for encouraging local industrial and commercial activities. While it stands to record that the company did contribute much to the development of the local industries, it at the same time was known that much of the profit accruing from the various projects undertaken by the concern was being monopolized by a handful of the merchants enjoying special connections with the prefectural officials. As this special group of merchants, forming a nucleus of a specific concern, moved to establish a yarn-spinning plant at Kasaoka, in April, 1871, conflict of interests between this group and local farmers under the leadership of the small-scale yarn-spinning manufacturers operating with obsolete, manual process, became undeniably apparent.

The situation further spurred on the popular consciousness of the civilian rights. Championed by Johei Sakata, local wealthy farmers and mer-

chants found their eloquent spokesmen in Jumpei Hayashi, Nen Uyeda and Heizaemon Ohashi, of Kurashiki, and others, all imbued with the idea of Imperialism and anti-foreignism. They, in unison, had to oppose to the projected land tax reform in the belief that such would inevitably lead to a feudalistic state ownership of land and to a capitalism manipulated by politicians and merchants. To further advance their cause, they, in July, 1878, moved to inaugurate the *Koji Shimpo*, a political journal published by Kenso Ishizaka, a practising physician.

The way for this had been paved by a group of *ex-samurai* intellectual elements, including Seishi Takeuchi of the *Somo Zasshi* and Eitaro Komatsubara, Tsuyoshi Yamawaki and Shingo Seki of the *Hyoron Shimbun*, all of whom had earlier gone up to Tokyo for the furtherance of their cause. These persons, with the exception of Seki, hailing from a private English institute, had been instructed at the Keio Gijuku inaugurated by Yukichi Fukuzawa, the forerunner of modern democracy in Japan, and, as such, were ranked among the most radical exponents of the people's rights. Indicative of their tendency between the years 1875 and 1876 was an article written by Komatsubara, contributed to the *Hyoron Zasshi*, which was entitled "Dictatorial Regime Should Be Downed."

In the meantime, the contributions rendered by this group to the popular movement for the enhancement of people's rights should be noted with special emphasis.

Deploring the fact that the contemporary people lacked sufficient enlightenment about the way of modern democratic administration, these intellectual elements, hailing from the defunct *samurai* class, steadfastly prided themselves on the firm conviction that they were among the best patriots of the time. Following their arrest on charges of violation of the provisions of the Act of Press, however, they began to notice an error in their fundamental philosophy, and were going to be convinced that it lay within their responsibility to train the ill-informed contemporary common people in the right direction. Such ideological metamorphosis was afterwards exemplified in the inauguration of the *Sanyo Shinpo* in Okayama in January, 1879. In November, 1877, Komatsubara, while in prison, sent the following epistle to Kiichi Nishi, pledging his unswerving effort for the cause of the early establishment of a prefectural assembly.

"It is entirely beyond my comprehension that Okayama prefecture has up to this very moment failed to establish a prefectural assembly.....For promoting the cause of liberty and people's rights, the first pre-requisite should be a positive participation by common populace in local administration. It should be entirely improper for people at large to sit idle and wait

for what the officials happen to provide them with, although, just at this moment, such may have to be conceded as unavoidable. Once people yearn for liberty and civil rights, it behooves that they take the initiative, and, for the furtherance of their cause, persevere to the very last moment. Conceding that such may not be achieved overnight, why should we not take the lead and discuss the matter with the prefectural governor, the councillor and other pertinent officials so that Okayama may have the honor of being the foremost among all the other prefectures to inaugurate a fully democratic prefectural assembly?"

The epistle went on: "Start should be made from where it is possible. The inauguration of a prefectural assembly would be the harbinger of the eventual establishment of a national parliament, for, then, deputies elected from among the common people will have had an opportunity of directly participating in local administration, to discuss taxes and measures for people's welfare. Thus, once a prefectural assembly is brought into existence, the desired establishment of a national parliament will be much speeded up. Seen in this light, the first thing of importance at this juncture should be that vigorous steps be taken for inaugurating a prefectural assembly."

In receipt of the letter, Nishi evidently was so moved that he redoubled his determination to proceed along the premeditated course of endeavoring for the inauguration of prefectural assembly as a precursor to a national assembly. It is significant that, in the meantime, Nishi, encouraged by Komatsubara and other compatriots, gradually found himself in a leading position in Okayama.

The popular movement for the promotion of liberty and people's civil rights found a new impetus in the convention of the *Aikokusha* (Patriots' Society) in September, 1878, in which Nishi played a leading role.

### III. Development of Movement for Inauguration of Diet (*Kokukai*)

Encouraged and backed by Komatsubara, Nishi now embarked upon a vigorous move for an early inauguration of a national diet. His followers, taking advantage of Nishi's popularity, energetically appealed not only to the *ex-samurai* class but to the rank and file of common people. First to respond was the afore-mentioned Johei Sakata, while many sympathizers were found in Mimasaka region. This culminated in the presentation, on March 11, 1878, of a petition, joined by all regional leaders, to the prefectural governor, to the effect that steps be taken for the convocation of a prefectural assembly. The demand, however, was turned down on the ground

that such was a matter to be determined by dint of the national constitution but not one to be left to the discretion of a single prefecture.

The move, however, was a signal. A number of political societies and associations came into being one after another in its sequel, these including the "*Kyoshi*" (Society of Friends) sponsored by Tateishi and Nakashima of Tsuyama (April, 1878), the "*Jikkosha*" (Society of Action) by Kobayashi and Takeuchi of Okayama, the "*Jieisha*" (Society of Self-Protection) by Manto in Saidaiji, and others. Kobayashi, Takeuchi and Nakagawa were found among those attending the rally to the *Aikokusha* in September the same year. In December, Komatsubara, lately released from prison, came back to Okayama, and immediately set about preparing for the inauguration of the *Sanyo Shimpo*, slated to be issued on January 4, 1879.

In February, 1879, the Okayama prefectural assembly was duly opened. The *Sanyo Shimpo*, in the election of deputies prior to this, played a very big role, while, following the inauguration, Komatsubara volunteered to positively direct the proceedings of the assembly, devoting much space in his paper to reporting the assembly activity, which substantially contributed toward enhancing the people's interest in the novel procedure of discussing administrative matters.

Now, time apparently was ripe for embarking upon a well-defined line of campaign for the ultimate objective of a national diet being convened. The movement took the form of an exhaustive all-prefecture combination of effort under the able leadership of Komatsubara and his colleague, as well as Johei Sakata, who had by this time been installed as the chairman of the Okayama prefectural assembly. The force was joined by the whole staff of the assembly members and the leaders of the afore-mentioned political societies and associations down to regional farmers' representatives. Response to the appeal was almost spontaneous and explosive, it is recorded, for the assembly members, organized into a committee, were surprised to find more than 100,000 prefectural inhabitants volunteer to become actively-participating members of the vast movement. These men, on June 3, 1879, gathered in a comprehensive conference, when Kusuo Kobayashi was elected chairman. The rally eagerly discussed the measures for an early convocation of a diet. Decision was reached that a petition be submitted to the Tokyo government on October 4 the same year.

On that day, an extraordinary meeting of the regular members, numbering no less than 700, was held in the precinct of a Shinto shrine in Ishizeki town, when committee members to carry the petition to Tokyo were elected. It is interesting to note that more than 80 per cent of those attending the meeting hailed from the ranks of common people, those from

the *ex-samurai* class numbering less than 20 per cent.

Most of the elected members of the committee, though hailing from the ranks of common people, were largely propertied big farmers influential in their respective districts. That the *ex-samurai* failed to qualify for the membership at this meeting was highly significant in that it indicated that common people were fast replacing the old-privileged class of *samurai* in social prestige. It, at the same time, served to point to a rivalry existing between the prefectural assembly members and civilian volunteering committee members, despite the fact that they both hailed from the ranks of common people. Reference in connection with this highly suggestive fact should be made to the following Table.

Table 1. Leaders in Movement for Petitioning for Inauguration of Diet.

Name	Hailing from	Social status	Official post in 1879	Ibid in 1890	Remarks
Kenso Ishizaka	Kurashiki	official plupician	chief secretary of <i>Shinbokukai</i>	—	Owner of <i>Koji Shinpo</i> , 1878; moved to Tokyo, 1884
Kiichi Nishi	Okayama	Petty <i>samurai</i>		Diet member (Ind.)	Prof. at <i>Ihokan</i> ; Deputy Pref. Councillor, 1875
Johei Sakata	Ibara	Chinese scholar	Chairman of pref. assembly	Diet member (Ind.)	Director <i>Kojokan</i>
Eitaro Komatsubara	Okayama	Petty <i>samurai</i>	Chief editor, <i>Sanyo Shinpo</i>	Chief public Safety Bureau Home Office	Chief editor, <i>Hyoron Shinbun</i> 1875; Imprisoned, 1876; Foreign Office official, 1880
Heishiro Kato	Katsuyama	Petty <i>samurai</i>	Primary school teacher	Diet member (Lib.)	Chief editor, <i>Mimasaha Zasshi</i> , 1880; Liberal Party member, 1883
Kusuo Kobayashi	Okayama	Petty <i>samurai</i>	—	Diet member (Lib.)	Liberal Party member, 1881
Jumpei Hayashi	Kurashiki	Merchant- <i>shoya</i>	Pref. assembly member	Chairman, Pref. assembly	<i>Koji Shinpo</i> , 1878; <i>Koji Zappo</i> , 1879; Sanyo Liberal Party, 1881

Masayasu Sawada	Okayama	Merchant	Pref. assembly member	—	Rice dealer, 1873; Husband of Eiko Fukuda's sister
Izuye Oshio	Asakuchi	<i>shoya</i>	Pref. assembly member	Banker in Osaka	Chief editor, <i>Koji Shinpo</i> 1883
Sosuke Shibahara	Takahasi	<i>shoya</i>	Pref. assembly member	—	Sponsor of Takahari hospital 1883
Kyugo Miura	Wake	<i>shoya</i>	Pref. assembly member	—	Director, Okayama chamber of Commerce, 1880; Director, Okayama Rice Exchange, 1884
Eiji Suga	Kume	<i>shoya</i>	Pref. assembly member	Acting vice-prefgrveuor	Member of <i>Tomo no sha</i> , Mimasaka Liberal Party
Wakaru Tateishi	Tsuyama	Big <i>shoya</i>	Pref. assembly member	Dieb member (Lis.)	Member of <i>Tomo-no-sha</i> , Mimasaka Lib. Party
Mozo Ide	Ochiai	<i>shoya</i>	—	Pref. assembly member	Member of <i>Tomo-no-sha</i> , Mimasaka Lib. Party

Setting aside Ishizaka, Nishi and Komatsubara for obvious reasons, three of the committee members, including Kato, Kobayashi and Ide, could be counted as "civilian volunteers", while the remaining eight belonged to the group of prefectural deputies. Interesting also to note in this connection was the fact that, while the latter group was affiliated with the central faction of the Liberal Party, the former represented the Party's left wing. This was later to be reflected in the official posts which these men, later in 1890's, were to occupy, respectively.

It has already been pointed out that while the prefectural assembly members in 1879 and 1880 were mostly those hailing from the big-farmer class, they were being replaced in the following year by those coming up from the smaller-scale farmer class. This, incidentally, shows that the diet-petitioning movement was mainly sustained by the intellectual elements of the *ex-samurai* class under a positive assistance rendered by leading landowners and big farmers backed up by an extensive range of social layers, including the prestige-declining *ex-samurai* and small-scaled farmers.

The economic foundation on which they stood unavoidably required that the land tax be reduced. While the land tax reform was slated for 1880, the best way for realizing their objective apparently was the acquisition for them of the right to participate in the discussion and decision on the matters pertaining to the national budget and taxation on the floors of a diet, and, for this, the experience and self-confidence to be acquired at the already-opened prefectural assembly was obviously valuable.

The lower-classed farmers, meanwhile, demanded a revolutionary reform of the then-existing land system. They, as a force, was so illorganized that their fight against the persisting feudalism was destined to amount to mere sporadic and isolated outbursts. Their cause, in the meantime, was gradually assimilated into the better-organized fight for a reduction of land tax and for an early inauguration of a national diet.

Oshio, among the leaders of the movement, understood that the first task to be tackled by the current bourgeois democracy would have to be the inauguration of a diet where the arbitrary mores of a dictatorial regime could be effectively checked and kept under a constant vigilance of the nation. At the same time, it was understood that Japan should stand on an equal footing with foreign nations. This was unmistakably elaborated in his "Appeal to the Countrymen" and in the "Petition for the Opening of a Diet" drafted by Kiichi Nishi.

The development of the movement, thus, headed first toward the solution of the political issues confronting the nation, in preference to that of the external affairs. In his letter to Johei Sakata, then the chairman of the Okayama prefectural assembly, Kiichi Nishi boldly gave vent to his firm determination with which the leaders avowed to proceed along the movement.

Now, the members of the committee, elected at the extraordinary meeting in October, 1879, were so adamantly determined that, as they went up to Tokyo, they openly declared that they would not retrace their step to Okayama unless and until their petition was taken up. Their action, however, was evidently improper and inappropriate, as criticized in late years, in that they failed to act in concert with people of the other prefectures, trying to achieve their objective once and for all and "independently" of other forces in being.

Oshio, Ide and Mimura, reaching Tokyo, called upon the members of the Okayama prefectural assembly who happened to be there for a nationwide conference, to gather at Restaurant Nakamura, Ryogoku, on February 22, to discuss the question of petitioning for the opening of a diet. On March 2, they invited the the members of the petition committee of various

prefectures arriving in Tokyo to their temporary lodging quarters for a similar conference, when decision was reached on a set of rules and on the convocation of a comprehensive rally in August the same year. The decision was made into a contract duly signed by the members of the committee on the following day.

Pledging that they would henceforth keep in constant contact among each other, the attendants nominated Oshio as the presiding chairman. On March 15, on the other hand, Osaka witnessed the fourth convention of the *Aikokusha* convened, which, as early as early as March 17, developed into a Federation for the Opening of a Diet. The Federation promptly moved to decide on the presentation of a petition in the name of Kenkichi Kataoka and Hironaka Kono and on the convocation of a national rally in Tokyo in the following fall.

Meanwhile, the *Jikkosha* under the leadership of Kobayashi and Takeuchi was the center of activity in Osaka, while, in Tsuyama, the *Kyoto-Kondankai* (Natives' Brotherhood) led by Tateishi and Nakashima was playing a similar role. Contemporary local newspapers are recorded to have reported the activity of the *Jikkosha* to the following effect :

"Meetings took place two or three times every month. Every time admittance was free, and the audience always numbered several hundred, many of them coming all the way from their native places miles away just to hear the speakers harangue. Most of the speeches delivered touched politics and the issue of people's rights."

Political utterances at these meetings proved so appealing to the attentive audiences. In the meantime, the more radical elements in the prefectural assembly were vigorously intensifying their maneuvers in the assembly for the furtherance of the people's rights. Their concerted attack on the 1879 budget estimates involving the expenditure of local taxes was especially concentrated on the police expenditures, while, on the other hand, they struggled for a popular election of county administrators and for the extension of the procedural rights of a prefectural assembly.

In the meantime, Oshio, one of the members of the petition committee, had returned to Okayama and in no time set about the formation of the *Kibi Shinbokukai* (Okayama Fraternity) in cooperation with Jumpei Hayashi. He further went on to draft an appeal to the members of the aforementioned Federation on the petition, joined by the inhabitants of the provinces of Bizen, Bicchu and Mimasaka, for an early opening of a national diet. The petition was made public on October 7 the same year. Responding to the fervent appeal, the prefectural inhabitants elected Kobayashi and Kato as their deputies, asking them to immediately proceed to Tokyo with a



petition prepared by the populace of the above-mentioned three provinces in Okayama prefecture. They, meeting with sixty-eight proxies from all over the country, on November 10, resolved that a diet be inaugurated by force of a united front presented by the nation at a national rally rather than through a mere petition. This, indeed, was a bold step taken in the history of the popular campaign urging the opening of a diet. With this as a parting point, the movement took on a more militant aspect, which, incidentally, indicated the shift of the leadership in the campaign, as far as Okayama prefecture was concerned, from the trio of Oshio, Mimura and Ide to the combination of Kato and Kobayashi.

#### IV. Birth of the Sanyo Liberal Party.

In 1879, the movement urging the opening of a diet, as unfolded in Okayama, had as its principal exponents the local intellectual elements hailing from the *ex-samurai* class, strongly backed by influential landowners and big farmers as well as by the old *samurai* ingredients and destitute farming population. It was unavoidable, then, that the farmers' demand that the land be restored and the land rents be reduced should have been subordinated to the wealthy farmers' voice for a lower land tax, especially since it was stipulated that chapter 8 of the Act on the Land Tax Reform should be revised in 1880, the big propertied farmers, in order to safeguard their material profit resulting from the marked rise in the price of rice after 1877, had to take over the leadership in the movement for the diet-convocation, in which an extensive range of land-tilling farming population was organized into a stiff anti-government force.

It should be noted, however, that those destined to gain profit from a rise of commodity prices would naturally be confined to landowners, and, at best, to independent farmers. The fact should not be lost sight of, at the same time, that, at the time that land tax was reduced, small tenant farmers demanded that tax be paid in cash rather than in kind as hitherto. In March, 1879, the landowners in Sakatsu village near the city of Kurashiki organized themselves into a force to present a united front against the tenant farmers, while, in Nishihara village, Asakuchi county, tenancy disputes knew of no end. It is, thus, seen that the prevailing inflation simply resulted in class conflict among the farmers attended by a bitter rivalry. It was inevitable, then, that the nationwide campaign for the promotion of the people's rights led by big farmers should, at this particular juncture, begin to be isolated from the interests of the lower-classed farmers. In the following lines, attempt will be made to clarify the process, which eventually

led to the formation of the Sanyo Liberal Party.

The first noteworthy phenomenon witnessed in this connection was the retirement from the foremost line of activity by such figures as Nishi, Sakata, Ishizeki and Komatsubara, all hailing from the *ex-samurai* class. Persuaded by Yoshikata Hanabusa (*ex-Okayama* clansman, who was Japan's minister to Korea, 1877-80), who had just returned from Russia, about the advisability of serving with the Tokyo government in order to be better acquainted with the prevailing situation, Komatsubara, in February, 1879, went up to Tokyo in company with Shingo Seki, and, in 1880, found himself promoted to a minor secretaryship in the Foreign service. At about the same time, Seki also found service with the *Genroin* (Senate), took an active part in the *Omeisha* (Cherry Society) with Shuichi Numa, and, in 1882, was in charge of editing the government bulletin.

In December, 1879, Kiichi Nishi, supported by more than a thousand *ex-samurai* elements, became the president of the *Biryokusha* (What-Can-Do Society), an organization set up for the purpose of reclaiming the Bay of Kojima, which, if realized, was expected to offer added opportunities of work for the impoverished *ex-samurai*. In February, 1880, Johei Sakata retired as a member of the prefectural assembly, to devote himself to the management of the private *Kojokan* school.

Of the leaders listed in Table 1, the only ones remaining to continue their first-line activity were Kusuo Kobayashi and Heishiro Kato, belonging to the left wing faction. Wakaru Tateishi, Eiji Suga and Mozo Ide, hailing from the big-farmer class, and Kyugo Mimura, Masayasu Sawada and Jumpei Hayashi, also, were there to keep on the front line. Of these, the big-merchant group, centering around Kobayashi, moved to form the Sanyo Liberal Party, while Kato, shaking hands with the propertied farmers, proceeded to organize the Mimasaka Liberal Party.

In March, 1881, the *Jikkosha* under Kobayashi, the *Jieisha* under Ko Manto (a member of the prefectural assembly since the preceding year) and other political societies in existence in the southern part of the province were amalgamated into the *Jishusha* (Society of Self-Instruction) under the leadership of Ken Yamamoto, a Kochi native who had earlier found service with the *Osaka Shinpo*. The new organization embarked on the publication of a new journal called the *Chigo Shimbun*.

In the province of Mimasaka, a similar move was afoot. The *Mimasaka* (Mimasaka League) was established in February. Mamoru Nakashima and Heishiro Kato, in concert, started the publication of the *Mimasaka Zasshi* (Mimasaka Magazine). Noteworthy in this connection was the criticism labelled against the erstwhile supporters of the movement for people's rights

in the southern part of the province, printed in number 4 of this magazine, which deplored that, while in preceding years many came out to avow for their unswerving determination to fight for their cause, few recently would be found ready to devote their bit. This fact is eloquently indicated in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Statistics of Political Speeches.

	Titles			Speeches			Dissolution			Banned
	Okaya- yama	Tsu- yama	Total	Okaya- yama	Tsu- yama	Total	Okaya- yama	Tsu- yama	Total	
1880	?	?	287	?	?	59	—	—	—	—
1881	48	25	118	6	5	16	—	—	—	—
1882	41	38	87	6	6	17	3	3	7	8
1883	?	?	29	?	?	6	?	?	—	—
1884	—	20	20	—	3	3	—	2	2	—

With the year 1882 as the turning point, the center of the political move in the area of Okayama prefecture was shifted to the Tsuyama district. That the southern part of the province was gradually coming under the influence of the Inukai faction of the Progressive Party, while the northern Mimasaka region, centering around propertied farmers, continued to remain under the sway of the Liberal Party, will also be seen in Table 2.

With the formation of the Liberal Party in October, 1881, Kobayashi and Kato joined it to take charge of liaison with the party's provincial sub-structure. Kusuo Kobayashi, who had returned home from Tokyo at a time when the Sanyo Liberal Party was vigorously maneuvering to propagate its cause among the prefectural populace, in conjunction with Ken Yamamoto heading the *Jishusha*, took up an active leadership of the organization. On January 29, it was followed by the setting up of a committee at its provincial headquarters, which decided on the following policy platform for the Sanyo Liberal Party:

1. From now on the Sanyo Liberal Party shall constitute a provincial section of the Liberal Party.
2. It shall be known as the Sanyo section of the Liberal Party.
3. A newspaper shall be issued by the Party in order that its platform and policy be widely propagated.
4. Regular speech meetings shall take place, at the same time that a magazine be issued.
5. The committee membership for the inauguration of the organ news-

paper shall be concurrently held by the committee members of this headquarters.

6. The regulations and rules of the Party shall be revised.

For the implementation of the foregoing items 3 and 5, the various newspapers affiliated with the Liberal Party, were merged into the *Katsu-meisha* (Society of Enlightenment) in April, with the contributions by Kayoji Nakayama, Ko Manto and Kumataro Yamamoto, inaugurated the new newspaper, the *Chugoku Mainichi Shimbun*. Ken Yamamoto became its editor-in-chief, while Kobayashi was its president. Manto assumed the vice-presidency and Koji Fukui the managing editorship.

With the oppression exercised by the Tokyo government steeply adding to its intensity, however, an internal split ensued. Immediately after its publication, the newspaper was banned on May 5 and the left-wing faction, which had enjoyed the leadership of the Sanyo section of the Liberal Party, had to give it up. Ken Yamato, amidst the resulting embroilment, recorded the following:

“Kumataro Yamamoto and Ko Manto conspired to cheat Kayoji Nakayama and took control of the newspaper office. Myself and others were forced to retire. Nakayama, on account of this, suffered a loss amounting to several hundred yen. I, in concert with Kobayashi and others, tried to restore our lost position, to no avail.”

On the heels of the internal split of the Sanyo section of the Liberal Party, the left-wing elements, consisting of ex-*samurai*, were ousted, and the big merchant-landowner class, embodied in the person of Ko Manto, Jumpei Hayashi and Masayasu Sawada, found itself firmly established in leadership. Table 3, which follows, will afford a glimpse of the leaders of the Sanyo Liberal Party.

Table 3 clearly indicates a marked change brought about in the class formation in the right and left factions of the party. All of the right-wing faction, who now came up as the leading force, hailed from the ranks of the foremost big merchants and landowners. Indicative of the nature of this faction was the inclusion, as its members, of Heiyemon Ohashi, Ohashi, owner of 100-*cho* land in Kurashiki, and Kinichiro Hoshijima, owner, likewise, of 100-*cho* land in Kojima county.

In the meantime, Ken Yamamoto, ousted from his position of influence, left Okayama in November the same year, to rear, to return to Osaka, while Kusuo Kobayashi, also of the left-wing faction, had to bid farewell to Okayama. He went up to Tokyo to become a member of the Liberal Party. Eiko Kageyama, who had Masayasu Sawada as the husband of her sister and who was a close friend of a sister of Kobayashi, joined the

Table 3. Leaders of the Sanyo Liberal Party (Centering around 1852)

	Hail from	Social status	1879	1880	1881	1882	Sanyo Lib. Party	1883	1884 1885	1890	Others
sawada	Okayama	Rice dealer	Preb-assembly member	ibid	ibid	ibid	Right wing	Pref assembly member			
Manto	Saidaiji	<i>shoya</i>		Pref. assembly	ibid	ibid	Right wing	Pref. assembly	ibid		Saidaiji town-master ; director, rice exchange
Yamamoto	Okayama	stone cutter		sponsor, Okayama chamber of Commerce	Head, <i>Jishusha</i>	<i>Katsumeisha</i>	Right wing				Diecl, sept. 1882
Hayashi	Kurashiki	drug dealer	Pref. assembly	ibid	ibid	ibid	Right wing	Pref. assembly	ibid	Chairman, Pref-Assembly	Defeated by Tsuyoshi Inukai for 1st Diet
Takeuchi	Okayama	<i>Samurai</i>		<i>Jikkosha</i>	<i>Jishusha</i>	<i>Katsumeisha</i>	Right wing	—	Touring in Europe	Osaka Mainichi	Defeated for 1st Diet
Fukui	Shimane	<i>Samurai</i>	school teacher	maga-gine	Lecturer	chief editor, <i>Katsumeisha</i>	Left wing	Preident <i>Ikkansha</i>		Director, <i>Nippon Kyodo Gakukai</i>	
Yamazaki	Kanaoka	farmer	—	—	—	—	Left wing	Lib. party	ibid		Defeated for 1st Diet
Yamamoto	Kochi	<i>Samurai</i>	<i>Osaka Shinpo</i>		<i>Jishusha</i>	chief editor, <i>Katsumeisha</i>	Left wing	<i>Eolnzen Jiyu shinbun</i>	Osaka incident	chif editor, <i>Shinonome Shinbun</i>	
Kobayashi	Okayama	<i>Samurai</i>	Petition member	<i>Jikkosha</i>	—	President <i>Katsumeisha</i>	Left wing	in Tokyo	Osaka incident	Diet membr	
Eiko Kageyama	Okayama	daughter of <i>Samurai</i>	12 years old	—	assistant teacher of primary school	—	—	Okayama womens Fraternity Society	Osaka incident	—	Operates Womens Business School in Tokyo

Okayama *Joshi Kondankai* (Women's Fraternity Society) in 1813, and, in the following year, following the dissolution of the body, proceeded to Tokyo.

Yahei Yamazaki, hailing from the farming class, remained alone in the Party, concentrating his effort on organizing destitute farming population, including tenant farmers. His stand was noteworthy as the economic tendency after 1871 was such that the class ramification of farmers was intensified, entailing a further decline of the status of medium and small-scaled farmers. Their tradition to fight for a revolutionary idea in opposition to the nonparliamentary dictatorial regime steadily being consolidated in Tokyo, however, was to be inherited in its original force by the subsequent movement in support of the Act of Tenancy, upheld by Yahei Yamazaki in April, 1891, and, further, was to be developed in the series of tenant farmers' disputes with the landowners successively taking place in later years.