

August 6 Hiroshima Day Rally, Session 2

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Signature Campaign for Ratification of TPNW is in Progress Thanks to Cooperation at the Grassroots

In Yamanashi prefecture, an “Association of Yamanashi Residents for the TPNW Ratification by the Japanese Government” has been working since May to promote the petition campaign. The association was created on the initiative of 14 eminent people, including Hibakusha, a leader of the campaign for the abolition of landmines, representatives of Citizens Alliance Yamanashi, Christians for Article 9, Kofu City YWCA, U-Coop Yamanashi Headquarters, Gensuikin, Gensuikyo etc. It is trying to extend cooperation from the grassroots level upward, with the aim of changing the attitude of the Japanese Government, which is turning its back to the TPNW – an attitude unworthy of an A-bombed country. What we want to do is to change this by the power of public opinion. As a result of our efforts, cooperation between citizen groups at the grassroots has now reached a level it has never had before.

Experience involving autonomous associations of local residents

For about two and a half months since mid-April, the council of local residents associations in the Kokubo area of Kofu City has worked on the signature campaign to press the government of Japan to sign and ratify the TPNW. In that time it has gathered 1894 signatures. In fact, as early as April, a leader of the federation of local residents associations at its board meeting proposed to take up the signature campaign and it was decided that it was “a natural course of action for the Japanese government, as the government of an A-bombed country, to ratify the TPNW”. Petition forms were circulated among 3,000 households in the area, organized in 14 autonomous residents associations. All residents in the area were called to cooperate for signature collection. The signature forms were collected by each association mobiliz-

ing all member families. They were then put together by the president of the associations and eventually brought to the headquarters of the federation of these associations.

Extended Dialogue with Religious Groups

In Koshu City, members of “Nakamanowa”, a group taking part in our Association of Yamanashi Residents, visited 15 temples and shrines in the city to collect petitions and to ring the bell on August 6 and 9, at the time when the atomic bombs were dropped. The members brought with them a letter of request, signature forms printed by our Association, the leaflet “Let’s join hands” produced by Japan Gensuikyo, a form to respond to the request letter and a return envelope with postage.

During the dialogue, many priests serving small parishes explained how difficult it was to keep the management of their temples financially sound and said that they often were obliged to take a second job. In other temples, they told us that their bells were confiscated during the war and were melted and cast into guns. A Buddhist monk expressed his appreciation of our members’ enthusiasm for the cause of peace and promised that he would willingly cooperate with them in the petition campaign.

At each temple we called at, the petition caught the attention of the priest. He promised his support for the campaign and also agreed to ring the bell where the bell had not been taken by the military. We also received additional signatures collected from family members and chief parishioners.

Cooperation spreading between local authorities and primary and middle schools

In Koshu City, we visit primary and junior high schools in the City to invite them to work together with us. One of our members who formerly worked in junior high schools visited five junior high schools and met with principals and their assistants. Another member who regularly arranges “reading stories for peace” to school children called at primary schools to have discussions with teachers. At these meetings, our members talked about the “Gathering for Peace and ‘A-bomb and Humans’ Exhi-

bition” that we co-sponsor with Koshu City Hall General affairs division. Flyers announcing this event are distributed to each school and each family through the city education board.

At the primary schools our members visited, they gathered 40 signatures on the petition for the TPNW ratification from teachers and staff. Teachers said: “we learned about your activities through the A-bomb photo panel exhibition last year. We think it wrong that the Japanese government refuses to ratify the Treaty. We stand with you in our thoughts”.

In the “Peace Wave” actions that began on August 2nd, we are taking part through an A-bomb panel exhibition organized by Yamanashi Chapter of the New Japan Women’s Association and through the viewing of high school students’ “A-bomb paintings”. These two exhibitions will take place in 6 cities in the prefecture. Some of them have the support of the city education board while others are co-sponsored with local libraries. We use these exhibitions to collect signatures on the TPNW petition from the visitors.

In addition to all these actions, cooperation has developed with other local groups such as Article 9 Association and “Circle for the Defense of the Constitution”. This has allowed us to gather 32,725 signatures in total by the end-July. We are looking forward to drawing valuable lessons from the outcome of the World Conference and making good use of them to attain our goal of 150,000 signatures. In doing so, we are determined to do our best to win the coming general election in autumn in order to achieve a breakthrough in the current political situation so that Japan will join the TPNW.