

Review

Nationwide nurse labor strike in 1960–1961 and nursing policy

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I introduce shortly a study report on the hospital nursing strikes which in 1960–1961 spread rapidly throughout Japan. The nurses' private lives and their labor conditions at that time were restricted severely both in hospitals and dormitories by the feudalistic medical and managerial administration that had been in existence since the Meiji era.

About 3 years ago a CD-ROM database of Asahi Shinbun including the headlines for 55 years from 1945 to 1999 was issued. Because of my interest in the history of nursing after World War II, I was curious to know how many nursing or nursing-related articles were included in the CD in that 55-year-period in a commercial newspaper. Using the keyword "nursing" 1,672 of items of "nursing" were found. By categorizing the headlines including the word "nursing", there were 2 concentrations of articles that deal mainly with nursing strikes. The first concentration is in from 1960 to 1970 and the second from 1990 to 1993.

During the latter period, I was the Director of Nursing Division, at the Ministry of Health and Welfare in the Japanese Government. The medical service law was revised in 1985 and an ever increasing bed number in Japan was brought about in an arrangement depending on the community medical services plan made by each municipal body whether to decrease or to increase the bed number in each community. Many private hospital-owners rushed to make plans for increasing beds within a limited term based on the revised law. Influenced by the community medical plan, the nursing division received a lot of petitions to increase nursing staff and to solve the problem

of the shortage of nurses in their areas.

As the final measure to secure the nursing personnel, a new law was established in 1992. It contains guidelines for nurses' working conditions, nursing education, and the establishment of a "Nurse Center" (the Hollow-Work for nurses) in each prefecture and a "Central Nurse Center" in Tokyo to regulate the nursing resources in any place in Japan.

My questions were, what reaction was caused by the first period of the 2 concentrations of headlines in 1960–1961? And how did government officials manipulate medical and nursing policy in order to solve the shortage of nurses?

The sources of data that I analyzed to know the fact of nursing strikes in 1960–1961 are: ①-1 Newspapers edited by labor unions; for example, All Japan Red-Cross News (*zen-nisseki-news*), All Medical Workers Newspaper (*zen-iro-shinbun*) and The General Council of Trade Unions of Japan (*Sohyo*), ①-2 The Japanese Journal of Nursing (*kangogaku zasshi*) ② Diet Records ③ Opinions of nurses who participated in nursing strikes in 1960–1961, the former Director of Nursing Division and other nurses who have views about the nursing dispute and ④ Opinions of third parties on the working conditions of nurses.

A brief summary of this study is that: ① Nursing policy after the war concentrated on the improvement of nurse-teacher quality. ② Increasing the number of assistant nurses was effective for the shortage of nurses at that time. ③ Nursing strikes which had broken out throughout Japan had a strong impact on forming nursing policy thereafter.