

# GU Rits Voice No.2

General Union Ritsumeikan University Branch News No.2 July 2005

ゼネラルユニオン 立命館大学支部 ニュース No.2 2005年7月

## 立命館を不当労働行為と労基法違反で訴え

### Rits accused of Unfair Labour Practices

General Union files a complaint suit against Ritsumeikan at the Labour Commission on 8th July as a response to the *threats and harassment* made by the university against four union members. A complaint against Ritsumeikan's breaches of the Labour Standards law was filed the same day. The whole Ritsumeikan ordeal was shown on regional TV and covered extensively by the Japanese press, including national wire services.

ゼネラルユニオンは「有期雇用の講師らの就業規則がない＝労基法違反」「労組法7条違反の不当労働行為」といった数々の違法行為を改善するよう、立命館大学に数年にわたって要求してきたが、一向に改善されていない。そこで、やむなく、労働争議の開始を通告し、2005年7月8日、立命館を相手に、京都上労働基準局宛の「刑事告発」、大阪府労働委員会宛の「不当労働行為救済申立」を行った。不当労働行為救済申立書を折り込んであるので、一読されたい。

また、先日組合配布のピラの中の「言語教育の質に被害を与えている」、「立命館大学は、教師は3～4年経つともう良い教師ではなくなると考え、割り箸のように捨てている」、「大学は彼らの社会的弱さにつけこんでいるのだ」、「有期雇用の労働者をゴミのように扱う」という表現についての、学生・教職員に対する謝罪を当局は要求している。それに関する記事を2ページに掲載した(英文)。

In the last few weeks the General Union (GU) has entered into a labour dispute with Ritsumeikan University. For a number of years the GU has been fighting to guarantee the continued employment of our members employed on limited-term contracts at the university. When Rits refused to renew the contracts of union members, including who has been continuously employed by Ritsumeikan for 5-10 years, the union began a leafleting campaign aimed at creating an awareness of the problems faced by limited-term contract teachers and the adverse effect this system is having on education.

Far from addressing these serious issues, the response of the administration was to demand an apology from the union in regard to four statements on the union leaflet. These were that the present system, “damages the quality of education offered to students.” “assumes that after three or four years, teachers must not be any good any more, and casts them aside like disposable chopsticks.” And that “the management is happy to exploit the weakness of their position in society” “treating contract workers like garbage”.

Ritsumeikan subsequently followed this up with threats against union members who had participated in the leafleting. In response to this action, strictly illegal under Japanese Labour Law, on 8th July the GU filed an Unfair Labour Practices Suit at Osaka Prefectural Labour Commission. On the same date the GU also filed a complaint about Ritsumeikan's many breaches of the Labour Standards law with Kyoto-Kami Labour Standards Office, including its lack of working rules.

Document of the suit in Japanese, **Inside**  
Rits proposal dubbed 'Constructive Dissolution' (*Sayônara Jôkin Kôshi*)  
faces opposition in all fronts **Page 3-4**

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GU is open to everybody: office staff, teaching staff and all other workers (Japanese and non-Japanese)

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# End of semester pop quiz

## Test your opinions on working conditions at Rits!

1. Which of the following most *damages the quality of education offered to students*:
  - a. Allowing teachers to stay at Rits, thus enabling them to apply the knowledge, skills and understanding of Rits students they have worked hard to develop in their time here to future generations of Rits graduates
  - b. Forcing teachers to spend the last year of their contract at Rits job-hunting
2. Which best describes the Rits system of not allowing staff to continue working at Rits after three or four years:
  - a. Treating their staff as valued professionals who have made a considerable contribution and continuing commitment to their work
  - b. Treating *contract workers like garbage*
3. How would you describe Rits behaves towards its contract workers:
  - a. Rits treasures staff as if they were valued pieces of jewellery, worn with pride, year after year
  - b. Rits *casts them aside like disposable chopsticks*, using them briefly then throwing them away
4. A system where the majority of staff on non-renewable contracts are women and foreigners demonstrates an administration which:
  - a. Champions human rights, equality and justice
  - b. Is *happy to exploit the weakness of contract workers' position in society*

### RESULTS

Mostly 'a's: your utopian vision of Rits as a pioneering, internationally-minded employer is intact. Perhaps you need to take off your rose-tinted spectacles?

Mostly 'b's: you have a clear understanding of how Rits treats its contract workers, perhaps you are one?

Where did those phrases in *italics* come from? Earlier this month the Rits branch of the General Union gave out leaflets at Kinugasa, BKC and during Open Campus. The leaflets explained our case for wanting an end to contract term limits. The University's response was to object to the phrases italicised above and demand an apology. They did not deny the iniquities of the current system or dispute the accuracy of the facts, they merely objected to the language. As professionals, we are proud of our teaching and the work we do at Ritsumeikan (we wouldn't be fighting to stay here otherwise), but we are profoundly concerned by the way we are treated by management, not least because of the implications this has for maintaining a high quality of education.



***What do you think?***

***Which fosters a better environment at Rits, disposable goods or recycling?***



# “Constructive Dissolution” of existing pay and conditions?

The decision of Ritsumeikan management to cut a month from the bonus of full-time employees and to introduce a new evaluation system has caused outrage, with some faculties refusing to conduct normal business until the proposal is withdrawn.

However, for the approximately 50% of Ritsumeikan’s employees who are on various limited term contracts, other developments are even more ominous.

*In the last few weeks news has surfaced that Ritsumeikan is discussing a sweeping reform which it refers to as the “constructive dissolution” of the existing Jokin koshi (senior lecturer) system.*

*While praising the success of its scheme, Ritsumeikan has let it be known that the axe is about to fall – constructively.*

*No new Jokin will be recruited from next year. The administration apparently plans to replace them with fixed-salary Shokutaku lecturers/instructors and Ninkisei limited-contract associate professors (recently introduced).*

Regrettably the Ninkisei, Jokin and Shokutaku teachers themselves have been left out of the discussion, although as language professionals they are able to provide creative and constructive suggestions for the upcoming language reforms.

## **Metal fatigue**

Management’s rationale for job cutting is that after 17 years, the Jokin scheme is now showing “*signs of fatigue*”. The roles of Jokin and Shokutaku have gone all blurry.

Enthusiastic shokutaku teachers are, management notes, beavering away extensively, making it difficult to claim that Jokin teachers are performing well enough to justify the “difference” in treatment.

After all, at 4 million yen a year, - 2 million yen less than the Jokin - and no 120,000 yen annual research allowance, the Shokutaku get very short shrift.

In every company, employees have the right to further qualifications to improve their skills. Shokutaku teachers do not have that right.

Oh and – the creators of the Shokutaku scheme felt they could not possibly ignore the fact that some shokutaku teachers feel it to be “unfair.”

It’s nice of them to notice.

## **Oh dear, what could the matter be?**

In our opinion, this “system fatigue” results from a factor unrelated to the performance or content of Jokin teachers’ work: the nature of the recently-introduced Shokutaku teacher

scheme.

Shokutaku teachers have a huge amount of classes to teach, but earn much less money than the Jokin teachers. Due to “market pressure”, Shokutaku teachers are forced to accept work under such conditions in order to avoid ending up unemployed.

Naturally, Shokutaku teachers work as enthusiastically as Jokin teachers and therefore it is no wonder they feel they are being treated unfairly.

Neither Shokutaku teachers nor Jokin teachers have the right to visit conferences during teaching time – even if they willingly agree to make up for these classes.

But to put the blame for all this on the Jokin teacher scheme – doesn’t this seem to confound cause and result?

## **Constructive praise for the Jokin scheme/ Let’s hear it for the Jokin scheme**

We fully agree with management’s assessment that the Jokin scheme has been highly significant in securing many specialist native teachers to promote language education at Ritsumeikan.

We’d like to concur with management that the Jokin have been playing a large role in work related to entrance exams, consultation on studies, material development, CLA lectures, staffing the foreign language communication room, as well coordinating and sourcing native part-time teachers.

Management notes with pride how other universities have even emulated Rits’ success by setting up similar schemes. Jokin, it is alleged, have gone on to take up specialist positions at Ritsumeikan and other universities, contributing to language education in Japan.

Victims of their own success?

It’s good to agree on things.

## **The Hitchhikers’ Guide to the Contracts Galaxy**

### **What Ninkisei get**

There are various Ninkisei contracts, although not yet as many as there are galaxies.

There’s the so-called “tenure-track Ninkisei,” the International Institute ninkisei, and recently a new Ninkisei contract has been introduced.

These faculty have been recently introduced into the College of International Relations and the Economics Department.

For these new positions, Ritsumeikan is looking for

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teachers “with a PhD who are under 35.” Their pay and some of their conditions are also worse than those of the existing Jokin.

All Ninkisei receive research funds but differing pay and conditions. All have one thing in common: a five-year contract.

### What Ninkisei don't get

Tenure. These positions have been specifically created to create virtual academics.

### What Jokin are about to not get

A “three one-year contracts plus a further one year contract” system, with a salary of 6.2 million a year and 120,000 yen annual research funds. Hasta la vista, Jokin.

### What Shokutaku get

Shokutaku are presently paid only ¥300,000 per month, receive only two months' annual bonus, and are limited to five years' employment at Rits, through a series of one-year contracts.

Each cut-price Shokutaku costs Ritsumeikan ¥2 million

less a year than a Jokin.

### What Shokutaku don't get

Many of the existing Shokutaku took their positions on the understanding that they would be in a better position to become Jokin. Some even received promises to this effect.

Most of the existing Shokutaku would not be eligible to apply for the Ninkisei positions.

### What does it all mean?

While Rits' proposals talk about the need to improve conditions for Shokutaku, they have so far not explained what they mean by this.

We have little faith that they will not use this to cut their costs further, since one of the reasons given for the abolition of the Jokin system is that they could not justify the pay differential when Shokutaku were doing much the same work as the Jokin.

The administration ominously boasts that similar changes will be embraced by universities throughout Japan - the implication being that yet again, Rits are the “trendsetters.”



Disposable razor (used in public baths)  
使い捨てカミソリ (公衆浴場用)



Disposable chopstick (used in restaurants)  
使い捨て割り箸 (食堂用)



Disposable toothbrush (used in hotels)  
使い捨て歯ブラシ (ホテル用)



Disposable Rits teacher (used by Ritsumeikan educational organizations)  
使い捨て立命館教師 (立命館の教育機関用)

## Why does Rits treat some teachers as disposable objects? どうして立命館は一部の教師を使い捨てにするの？