Grua/O’Connell Fellowship Review
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I used my Grua/O’Connell Fellowship to travel to Tokyo from January 7-21, 2013. I conducted archival research and interviews in support of my honors project on political participation among postwar labor unions in Japan.

I began my Fellowship in Tokyo by visiting the Asian Forum Japan (AFJ), a political think-tank at which I worked during my year abroad. While there, I interviewed Kin-Ichi Yoshihara, the AFJ’s president, regarding political involvement of labor unions in the 1960s. We also talked about recent developments involving cooperation between Rengo, Japan’s current largest labor federation, and the LDP, Japan’s largest political party. I interviewed Mr. Yoshihara a second time towards the end of my visit.

I made several visits during my fellowship period to the National Diet Library (国立国会図書館) and the library of the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (労働政策研究・研修機構, or JILPT). While at the National Diet Library, I copied approximately 400 pages of Japanese-language materials, including reference material about Japanese labor movements, monthly magazines published by Sohyo, the labor federation on which most of my research focuses, and other related documents. While at the JILPT, I was able to access their special collection of Sohyo-related documents with the help of Noda Tetsuo, a research affiliate of the JILPT. I copied many Japanese-language documents written by Sohyo and the Japan Socialist Party about their cooperation during the anti-U.S.-Japan Security Treaty protests in 1960. These include many documents that, according to Professor Toru Shinoda, have not been in any previous research on Sohyo. I also copied several newspaper articles from 1960, as well as many articles from Sohyo News, Sohyo’s English-language newsletter.
While in Tokyo, I was able to interview Yoshihisa Furukawa, a Diet Member from Kyushu, Japan, about his stance on organized labor as a member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. He had several interesting things to say about the potential for future cooperation between the LDP and labor unions, between whom cooperation has been heretofore unheard of. Mr. Furukawa also introduced me to Yuko Obuchi, another member of parliament with whom I talked further about Japan’s organized labor.

I concluded my visit to Tokyo with an interview with Professor Toru Shinoda, a labor historian and political scientist at Waseda University. Professor Shinoda has helped me with my research since my year abroad at Waseda University. He told me many interesting things about changes in the nature of union political involvement surrounding the Oil Crisis in Japan in 1973. Professor Shinoda also reviewed and commented on the materials that I had copied from the National Diet Library and JILPT.