

Kazuo Sugeno

菅野先生、このLLRN Bob Hepple賞を授与させていただくことにあたり、まことに光榮に存じます。これより先生が、いかに授賞されるに値すべき素晴らしい業績を挙げられてこられたかを、簡単に説明させていただきたいと存じます。

In reading the *laudatio* published for prior recipients of this award a universal theme that emerges is the expression of what an honor and pleasure it is to bestow it. I second that heartfelt emotion in presenting the Bob Hepple award to Kazuo Sugeno, whom I have known and admired for twenty years. He is the single most commanding figure in Japanese labor law today and is internationally recognized as a keen student and major exponent of comparative labor law. A word on each. First to Japan.

Sugeno-*sensei* graduated from the University of Tokyo in 1966. He remained there first as a research assistant and then as a professor until reaching the mandatory age of retirement in 2004. He then joined the faculty of law at Meiji University. His period of service on the *Todai* faculty was capped by his appointment as Dean of the Graduate School of Law and Politics and the Faculty of Law from 2001-2003. All the while he produced a substantial and highly regarded body of work on Japanese labor law, the substance of which is much too extensive to be rehearsed here, but some of which has been translated into several languages.

However, his prominence and influence transcended and continues to transcend pure scholarship, valuable as that is in itself. An important and possibly unique feature of Japanese labor law and labor relations is a system of tripartite Labour Relations Commissions at the local and national – or Central – level. By analogy, for students of labor law in the United States, these agencies merge the adjudicative unfair labor practice function of the National Labor Relations Board with the labor dispute mediative function of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation

Service.¹ The largest and so, naturally, the most active of the local commissions is for Tokyo. Professor Sugeno served as a Public Member of the Tokyo Metropolitan Labour Relations Commission for seven years, as a Public Member of the Central Labour Relations Commission for fifteen years, and as its Chair for six. In this, Kazuo's influence was strongly felt, his imprint enduring. In recognition, the government of Japan conferred on him the Order of the Sacred Treasure established by the Emperor Meiji for extraordinary contributions to Japan.

But there is more. At the conclusion of that service Sugeno-*sensei* was appointed to the presidency of the Japan Institute for Labor Policy & Training. The Institute is a large, government-sponsored "think tank." It conducts comprehensive research on emerging issues in labor policy and law that press to the fore by virtue of accelerating change in business practice and social needs, many of which are subject of presentations at this very Conference. It falls to him to direct the detection of the incipience of change – its source and direction – to direct the collection, collation, and analysis of the data, and to direct consideration of the potential for the recalibration of institutions and law. Here the scope of his work is truly worldwide. It is notable that one part of the Institute's portfolio is the sponsorship of the annual Tokyo Seminar. It assembles legal scholars on a global basis to address common issues in labor law and policy, and to disseminate their work. Under Professor Sugeno's direction, the Institute's broad and extensive comparative work performs an invaluable global function write large.

This brings us to Professor Sugeno's stature in comparative labor law. Those of us here who teach labor law know how difficult it is to master, I mean really *master*, one's own system. To master, to be not only conversant with but deeply knowledgeable in another legal system and in the vernacular of that other system is extremely difficult, and especially so when it involves a

¹ These bodies are described in detail in Kazuo Sugeno, JAPANESE EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR LAW Ch. 5 (Leo Kanowitz trans., 2002).

language and culture not one's own. But the pay-off, from those who become truly adept, enriches learning for us all. Kazuo's work displays just that mastery. He has been a visiting scholar at four of America's leading law schools – Yale, Harvard, Michigan, and Columbia – as well as at Oxford. His contribution to the comparative study of labor law was acknowledged by his election to the presidency of the Institutional Society for Labor and Social Security Law and his membership on the permanent Senior Editorial Board of the *Comparative Labor Law and Policy Journal*, an honor he shares with three previous holders of the Hepple Award – Manfred Weiss, Silvana Sciarra, and Bob Hepple himself.

There is yet another aspect of Kazuo Sugeno that simply cannot pass without mention: his kindness; his thoughtfulness; his consideration for others; his sheer generosity of spirit. He once remarked on the warmth and genuine solicitude manifested by a mentor we share in common, Clyde Summers²; but, those traits he noted in Clyde characterize him no less.

It is not just with pleasure, but with delight that I confer the Bob Hepple Award on Kazuo Sugeno.

Matthew Finkin
University of Illinois

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² Kazuo Sugeno, *My Teacher Clyde Summers*, 32 *Comp. Lab. L. & Pol'y J.* 505 (2011).