

## **A Conference Declared Open by a 78-Year-Old Peasant**

In the first half of the last century the Korean people put an end to the 40-year-long military occupation of their country by the Japanese imperialists and set out to build a new, prosperous and democratic country by their own efforts.

In February 1946, the first year after the liberation of Korea (August 15, 1945), the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea was established as a people's democratic government for carrying out the immediate tasks of the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution. It enforced democratic reforms including agrarian reform, enactment of sex equality law and nationalization of major industries in a short span of time. The democratic reforms resulted in colonial and feudal remnants liquidated in all spheres of social life, national industry beginning to revive and a democratic educational and cultural system set up.

Following the successful implementation of the tasks of the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution, a conference of the provincial, city and county people's committees of north Korea for founding the People's Committee of North Korea was held on February 17, 1947.

The conference was a historic one at which the People's Committee of North Korea, the genuine supreme power organ of the people, was formed for the first time in the history of the Korean nation. The conference approved the democratic laws announced by the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea and discussed and proclaimed the plan for national economic development for 1947. In view of the character and significance of the conference, who would deliver the opening address was an important issue.

Who delivered the opening address?

On February 16, the day before the conference, Kim Il Sung learned in detail about the preparations for the conference from the members of its preparatory committee in his office in the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea.

Upon hearing that they had yet to select the person who would deliver the

opening address, he said that it would be good to choose the oldest peasant or worker among the delegates to the conference, who had long undergone hardships before liberation and was now working faithfully in support of the people's government.

The person who conformed to these criteria was a delegate from Kangdong County.

He was an ordinary peasant who had lived as a farm hand and sharecropper for 30 years in the county. After the liberation of the country he had assiduously farmed the land distributed to him, and paid the tax in kind before anyone else and donated rice to the country out of patriotism. Approved as a hard-working peasant by the villagers, he had been elected to the county people's committee.

The day before the conference Kim Il Sung met the old peasant. After hearing his account of his family background, Kim Il Sung said to him: Now our peasants have become the eternal masters of the country and the land; ours is a really good system as an old man like you has been elected as a member of the people's committee; I would like you to deliver the opening address at the conference.

The old man was so surprised and moved by his unexpected offer that he declined.

Then Kim Il Sung earnestly said to the old man that he could do it well and that if he did, it would exert a great influence on the participants in the conference.

In this way the 78-year-old peasant delivered the opening address.

This anecdote eloquently testifies to the fact that the conference was a grand meeting of genuine representatives of the people, who had become the masters of the country, to build a supreme power organ that embodied the will of the people.