

“It is still definitely wrong!”

“Social Welfare Reform” is proceeding on its way. The financial deficit crisis has promoted certain fields, including the “Law to Support the Self-Reliance of Persons with Disabilities,” encouraging disabled persons to live self-reliant lives so the government can reduce its expenses. This policy is, in fact, only downsizing the social security system that aids people’s survival as human beings.

Should we just accept social welfare reform because of the financial deficit? Instead, isn’t it right to reorganize the fiscal situation not just by “downsizing,” but by “bringing up” taxpayers and social welfare payers? Have these policies been introduced in our social system?

These “bringing up” approaches erupted in the late 90s. Most approaches were to secure a system for women to work, women who have been working inside the home doing housekeeping, nursing, and caregiving; in other words, women who accepted “unpaid labor.” It was a chance for women to get paid jobs and to obtain full membership in society. It was an attempt to change the social system itself and to nurture new taxpayers and social welfare payers.

The proposal to abolish the spousal exemption system and Category III of insured people from the social welfare system was beneficial for women who had to adjust their working patterns and ended up economically dependent on their husbands. The introduction of employee’s pensions for part-time workers was not only to support these workers’ sustained retirement life, but also to make corporations stop increasing unstable employment so they would not have to take responsibility for their share of the social insurance contribution. In addition, it was aiming to increase the number of pension payers.

The “bringing up” approaches were the beginning of questioning the old “postwar framework” that had forced men to work as the “breadwinner,” the only person in the family to provide financial support and to pay taxes and pensions. On the other hand, women worked either inside the house as unpaid labor or had to work as low-wage workers for the reduction of corporations’ costs. In other words, it was an attempt to convert from the postwar framework, which was achieved solely based on the gendered division of labor, into “gender-sensitive social welfare reform.”

However, the perspective has been fading because of the backlash today. The old system is left untouched. Instead, “social welfare reform” is being introduced in a violent manner through raising taxes, cutting social security, and lowering wages. These reforms will only lead us to a polarized society of a wealthy minority and a vast majority of poor people. We should not follow the current trend and should speak out forcefully that “It is definitely wrong!!”

For the true reform of social welfare from a gender-sensitive perspective, we need to restudy thoroughly “what is going on,” and we need to discuss thoroughly how to reorganize our strategies for our reforms to lead to our happiness. This issue of our newsletter is our first small step.